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THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE by Pauline Carrington Bouvé

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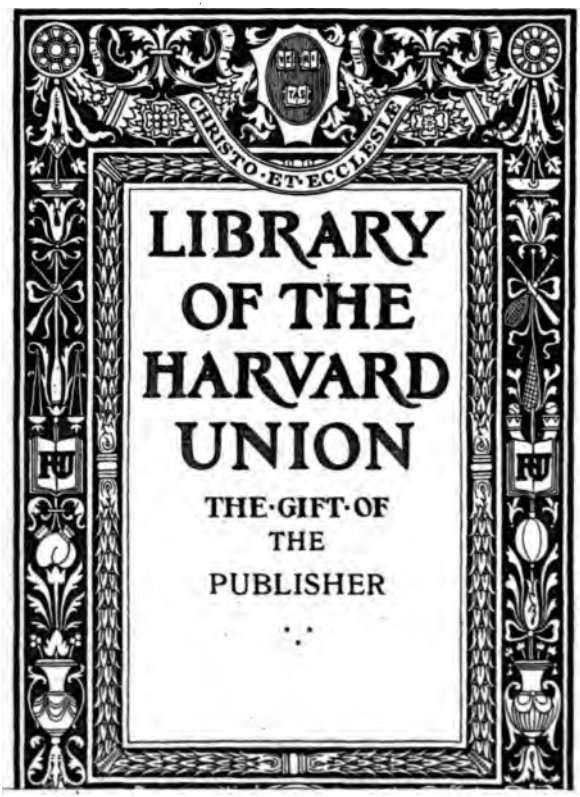

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THEIR SHADOWS BEFORE

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A Story of
The Southampton Insurrection
By
Pauline Carrington Bouvé

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TO

FRANCES GEORGIANA PRESCOTT BELKNAP

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Chapter I.

"UNCLE ISHAM, would you like to be white like me?"

I was sitting in one of the broad-silled windows of the old stone kitchen at Winston Manor. Through the tiny, diamond-shaped panes of glass I could watch the pompous movements of my grandmother's pea-fowls as they marched with out-spread tails and in stately measure over the green sward, where the early hoar-frost lay like a silver veil. In colonial days the manor kitchen had served as magistrate's office, and the time-blackened oaken presses on either side of the enormous chimney were now used as dressers. Bits of broken crockery were visible through the circular openings of the ancient pigeon-holes where once had reposed valuable documents, written and signed by lordly fingers.

On the high-backed, uncomfortable settee in the corner — where of old my great-

grandfather, Sir Christopher Winston, had sat, dispensing favour and administering justice — sat old Uncle Isham, with his bowl of coffee beside him and his ash-cake on his knee. I gazed down into his wrinkled face from my high perch in the window, and in a vague sort of way my heart was troubled. He was a very old man, and I was a very little girl; yet he belonged to me. There was something strange in the situation.

"Why won't you tell me?" I persisted, unaccustomed to this reserve on the part of my usually voluble vassal and friend. With an imperious gesture of my small hands I smoothed down the folds of my new black silk apron over my scarlet frock, while my impatient heels beat such a vigorous tattoo upon the wall that Uncle Isham found it expedient to remove himself and his coffee to the other end of the settee in order to escape the shower of plaster that made a mimic snow-storm in my immediate vicinity.

"Missy done axed me a hard question," said the old man, slowly, as he set his bowl down carefully and whipped away the bits of broken plaster with a corner of his bandanna.

"Do de can'le-bug what fly aroun' in de summer evenin' wanter be one uv de big, shinin' stars in de sky?"

"Oh, yes, but the candle-bug can't think, you know: *you* are a person, you see," I rejoined with superior wisdom. "Being a person makes it different with you, of course."

Uncle Isham gave me a searching glance from between his half-shut eyelids, and nodded his head several times. These sapient, gentle nods suggested a happy combination of deference and decision.

"Missy," he said with lenient deliberation, "you is a mighty smart chile, I s'pec'; but some kinder things is clean pas' de jedgment uv chillun *an'* grown folks. All de diffrunce eber I see 'tween de can'le-bug

an' de nigger is dat de can'le-bug fly whareber he wanter go, an' de nigger cayn't. No, honey, er nigger slave ain't no pusson, de way I looks at it."

"Not a person? Why, don't you know you have a soul?" I asked in astonishment.

"I know I got feet an' han's, an' er hade jes' like yourn; but dey's *black*," said the old man, as he spread out his shrivelled brown hands upon his rheumatic knees. "Mebbe de soul what I got matches 'em," he proceeded reflectively, a half-humourous smile playing over his wrinkled face, like a touch of sunshine on a withered autumn leaf.

"No, no!" I explained anxiously. "God's souls are all white till they get themselves, or the Devil gets them, dirty."

"Amen, honey," was the fervent response to this observation. In our various and usually long conversations upon subjects philosophical, political, and theological, or, when in lighter vein, topics of more

general interest were under discussion, this formula of assent had become familiar to my ears.

"Amen! Amen!" he continued to repeat between the audible gulps and gurglings that proclaimed the downward course of the comforting but fast diminishing contents of the blue china bowl which he held to his lips. As he proceeded to the com pletion of his breakfast with more than usual deliberation, I became convinced that he was curiously indifferent upon a subject I conceived ought to be of great interest to him. I was disappointed in this indifference, but I determined to probe Uncle Isham's feelings in another quarter.

"Did you ever hate white people?" I asked calmly.

"Moses an' Aaron!" ejaculated Uncle Isham, in unfeigned amazement. He cast a furtive, distrustful glance around the room. "Who done put sech notions in yo' hade, honey?"

"Nobody. I was just thinking perhaps sometimes you couldn't help hating us a little."

"Dem ain't de right kinder thoughts fer er li'l' lady like you an' er po' ole nigger like me," he replied in an odd, troubled tone.

"I wouldn't blame you if you did," I said with fine candour. "If I were a slave, I would hate my master. Even if he were good to me, still, I think I would hate, yes, *hate* him. I could not help it."

"You is er cu'yus chile, er mighty cu'yus chile," said Uncle Isham, eyeing me suspiciously. "I ain't neber seed one befo' like you."

"I don't want to be,— curious, I mean," I rejoined humbly. "I can't help it, because I don't know when I'm going to be that way. Perhaps it is because I think a good deal about fairies and witches."

"Ain't no sech," was the positive rejoinder. I fancied that he looked relieved

now that we were getting into a less personal phase.

"Dat's what mek people go crazy, sech tales as dem. Read de Good Book, Missy, — read de Good Book."

"The Bible, you mean. Oh, that's just full of wizards and witches and soothsayers, — like conjurers and Voodoos, you know; and Revelations is like fairy tales a good deal, only it is so very scary! I don't want to go anywhere where I shall see locusts with hair like women, and things with three or four heads, do you?"

Uncle Isham pondered deeply over this query. He did not wish to commit himself hastily.

"Which one uv dem wuz it seen dem?" he inquired cautiously.

"Saint John the Baptist," I promptly replied, in the pride of knowledge, perceiving with satisfaction the impression my Scriptural erudition had produced.

"Dat's so. Amen an' bless de Lord!

But he went up inter de highest place, clean up ter de Sebenth Heben; an' *we* ain't gwine ter git dat fur, I reckin."

"Oh," I said, "I had not thought about that." This simple and cogent reasoning had overwhelmed me; but Uncle Isham's tongue seemed suddenly to be loosened, and he continued,—

"When de seben seals is loosed in de gret day, when the chain uv de bondman is broke by de han' uv de Lord, den 'twill be Glory, Glory, Glory!"

His dusky features were illumined by the glow of intense emotion as he spoke. "But *till* de gret day, it's wuk an' wait, wuk and wait." His voice sank into a monotone as he muttered these last words to himself, and he folded his toil-worn palms together across his knees. There was the suggestion of an infinite patience — a patience that was pathetic — in the attitude of those folded hands.

"You don't have to work now, Uncle

Isham," I said in an unsteady voice. "And you never will have to again. Now listen to me." I dropped down from the window-ledge, and stood directly in front of him. "As soon as I come of age, I will set you free. I do not want you to belong to me. I tell you I will set you free for ever and ever. See, I swear it, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost." And I made the sign of the cross upon the old man's face, just as I had seen the minister do in the baptismal service.

"Amen!" said Uncle Isham; but his voice was almost a whisper.

Thus was my childish vow made in the name of the Father, and traced upon the face of his child,—a marred, blurred, dark ened likeness, yet made in his own image.

Chapter II.

"PENELOPE, I have something to say to you," said my grandmother to me the morning after my conversation with Uncle Isham.

I hastily cast over in my mind all of my late sins of omission and commission, as with trembling fingers I put the last stitch into the "P" on my sampler. Now it was not usual for my grandmother to confer with me after this manner, so I waited in some perturbation to hear what she would say.

"Your grandfather thinks it quite time you should begin a regular course of instruction. He does not approve this habit you have fallen into of reading all sorts of books and following your own whims so entirely. He has engaged a teacher for you, who will probably arrive on this evening's coach from Richmond."

Amazement, chagrin, and, beyond all other emotions, a stifling sense of injustice

kept me silent after this startling announcement. The tones of her voice were as calm and the click of her knitting-needles as even and regular as though she had told me the most commonplace fact in the world, while my heart was fairly bursting with suppressed rage and grief.

No word of warning had been vouchsafed me; no opportunity given me to con over the lessons and tasks so detested, and, alas! so neglected. In an agony of anticipated humiliation, I reflected bitterly that I could not get through with a single line of the multiplication table perfectly, and that any attempt at conjugations or declensions would be fatal to my reputation as a student. There was no loophole of escape. I should be examined and disgraced!

Unmindful of these painful reflections that were torturing me, my grandmother continued placidly: —

"Ephraim will drive the carriage up to Jerusalem, and meet the Richmond coach.

I dare say he can get back to the manor in time for tea unless the sand drifts are too heavy."

A slight wind was stirring, for which I gave thanks inwardly. "I wish it might blow a scirocco!" I exclaimed fervently.

"Why, how is this?" she asked sharply, as she settled her spectacles well over her handsome nose. "I fancied from the way you were always poring over books that you would be quite pleased. Only a fortnight since, you expressed a desire to be sent to Miss Hugh's; and now, when your grandfather has arranged for you to have the best advantages at home, you look as gloomy and miserable as possible."

"O grandma," I exclaimed indiscreetly, "I think I *might* have been told about it. Just think of not having so much as a day's time to prepare myself! And then, the idea of a prim, long-nosed old maid always reproving, always correcting me,—it is fearful!" And I almost sobbed.

"I hope you are not going to have a fit of hysteria, Penelope. It would be unprecedented, I think, in a girl of your years; and as for the length of nose I cannot say, but it may relieve you to know that Mr. Basil Mortimer is not an old maid."

"*Mr. Basil Mortimer!*" I repeated stupidly. "He is a man, not a woman, then?"

"Yes, I think so, undoubtedly, Penelope. I thought I was quite clear on that point. In the mean time do try to get that stupid, surprised expression from your face: it makes you look absurd."

With which comforting assurance my grandmother departed, key-basket in hand, on her morning round of inspection in kitchen, pantry, china-closet, and linen-press.

The odious sampler fell from my knee unheeded. I sat dazed, stupefied. My thimble dropped from my finger and rolled across the hearth almost into the fire. As

I stooped to pick it up, a sense of utter desolation seemed to envelop my being. Who cared about my humiliation and disgrace? What did it matter if this hateful man who was coming *did* discover all of my weaknesses? There was no one who would really care. Grandmamma would only say that "children were sent to school to learn, not to show what they knew," which I felt to be true; but to be sent to school to show what one did *not* know, — that was a different thing.

With the clear, unerring instinct of childhood, I felt that I was not what my grandmother wished me to be; nor could I ever be. Between us there was not that beautiful sympathy that sometimes exists between old age and youth, — that sympathy which is the fruit of the union of infinite tenderness on the one side and of infinite faith on the other. My grandparents felt a natural love for me, no doubt; but it was my misfortune to be totally unlike my

father's family. In me they had suffered an unexpressed disappointment, the reflected shadow of which somewhat dimmed the sunshine of my child life; and so I learned to live a life apart. My little realm was guarded round about by a wall of self-restraint and shy reserve, impenetrable to all save Mammy and Uncle Isham. When other help seemed vain and comfort far, there was one haven of refuge ever open to me, — Mammy's cabin. There was no grief too deep, no joy too subtle, for her sympathetic ear and responsive heart.

Down in the "quarters" I was always sure to find solace of some sort. The artless adoration of innumerable little darkies who flocked around to do "Missy's" bidding, — each one eager to share "de sweetes' 'tater *yit* in de patch" and "de specklies' one uv all de guinea aiggs" — was at once soothing and exhilarating.

Upon Mammy's broad bosom, aching head and heart alike found repose. In this

moment of present dejection and anticipated woe, therefore, it was to her I turned for reassurance; and, hastily flinging my cloak over my head, I sped with nimble feet towards my sanctuary of peace.

All the cabins in "the quarters" were built of great round logs, covered with and rendered air-tight by a coat of mud, known among the negroes as "daub." The chimneys, which usually extended across the entire side of the wall, were built of the same substance. Mammy's cabin was preeminently superior to all the other habitations of the sort on the plantation by virtue of its construction, being built of hewed logs, "pointed" between the chinks with plaster instead of mud. It possessed, moreover, a glass window, which was the envy of every dweller in the "quarters." The square openings, with their wooden slides or shutters, which served for windows in the rest of the cabins, were rather unsatisfactory in cold weather, as they admitted

when open, or excluded when shut, both light and air at the same time.

The double row of cabins, with their little sweet-potato and tobacco patches on either side, presented a quite village-like appearance. The instinctive love of a tropical race for vivid colour and rhythmic sound displayed itself in the gay zinnias, red, white, and yellow chrysanthemums, and flaunting crimson dahlias that grew about the doorways, from which issued snatches of hymn or song chanted in the peculiar but melodious tones of the Southern slave. Swarms of small negroes were sunning themselves in the vicinity of old Aunt Phœbe's cabin.

"Yonder come Missy! Yonder come Missy!" chimed a chorus of voices; while as many rows of snowy teeth were displayed in smiles of welcome as I passed.

"Aun' Phibby roastin' er 'possum!" announced a nimble, ape-like boy, known as Tumbling Tom on account of certain gymnastic achievements.

"Unc' Solomon kotched him las' night, an' he sholy are fat." And the young acrobat smacked his lips unctuously.

"I don' keer how fat he are. *I* ain't gwine git none," replied a cynical girl of few years and scant raiment, as she described a circle with her great toe in the hot sandy soil.

"Drippin's is good on tater-skins," rejoined Tumbling Tom, with a knowing wink and an eloquent roll of his tongue. "An' I's gwine ter be on han' when dat 'possum gits done."

Savory whiffs of sweet potatoes, slowly roasting in their tiny graves of hot ashes on Aunt Phœbe's hearthstone, reached me through the half-open door; while the cheerful sizzling and sputtering of the coveted "drippin's" in the saucepan under the 'possum, which hung upon a spit devised by a large nail driven into the woodwork of the mantel-piece, or "hearth-shelf," as it is styled by the negroes, corroborated

Tom's declaration, and gave promise of a delectable feast for Uncle Solomon, the Nimrod of our plantation. Upon any other occasion but the present I would surely have been tempted and beguiled by the various enticements offered in the shape of "may-pops," pop-corn, "goober-pease," and "scaly-barks"; but to-day I firmly declined the offerings of my small handmaids, and went on my way.

Eastward stretched undulating fields of yellow tobacco-stalks, lately denuded for the curing. Westward lay an expanse of as yet uncut corn, intersected here and there by green hillocks, and fields of peanuts and sweet potatoes, which extended down to the "worn-out grounds," where broom-sedge flourished, despite scant nourishment, and black-eyed pease grew apace. Here and there an occasional persimmon-tree cast long shadows across the sunny cotton-fields that lay southward, towards the dark line of pine woods that merged into the mysterious depths of the swamps beyond.

From the tobacco-house on the hillside, where the hands were hanging the brown and golden leaves of the tobacco plants upon the tiers along the walls and on the conical roof, came the refrain of a melancholy ditty —

"If you kin pout,
I kin be stout:
So good-bye, my honey, Mary Jane."

The last mournful words reached me quite distinctly, as I stopped for a moment under the sheltering boughs of the juniper-tree, which cast a pool of shadows about Mammy's door.

"Good-bye, my honey, Mary Jane,—
Good-bye, good-bye, good-bye, Mary Jane."

The long-drawn wail suddenly ceased, and I became aware that Mammy was entertaining a visitor. Who could it be?

I knew that most of the negroes were busy in the fields or in the tobacco-house, and that Mammy usually disdained to con-

sort with "field hands," for whom she felt undisguised contempt. I listened. The voice was unfamiliar to me, and now and then in Mammy's voice there was a tone of suppressed excitement that struck oddly upon my ears.

Very gently I crept up the rickety steps, and peeped in. Mammy was sitting in her cane-bottomed chair by the window. Her hands were tightly clasped before her; while her widely-distended eyes were fixed with a frightened, unseeing expression upon those of the man who stood directly in front of her. A ray of sunshine streamed in through the vine-trellised window, and cast a broken bar of yellow light across the floor, bringing out in strong relief the green and red star pattern of the quilt that adorned the four-posted bed in the corner. Standing directly in the path of the sunbeam, the grotesque figure and singular visage of Mammy's strange companion seemed to be enveloped in a halo of golden radiance.

His misshapen figure, though short of stature and distorted by protuberances that grew from each side of the collar-bone, gave evidence of great muscular strength.

His head was well shaped, and the outline of face and feature was clearly defined. About the mouth and jaws there was a heaviness suggestive of latent brutality; while the abnormally developed forehead overhung a pair of deep-set, glowing eyes, which from their intensity of expression produced the peculiar effect of double pupils.

What struck me as most singular in the unique personality of the being before me was his hands. They were well formed, and coffee-coloured like his face, excepting that upon the back of one, and extending upward from the wrist of the other, the skin was as white as my own.

I stood riveted to the spot, deterred by some instinct from making the slightest noise that might betray my presence.

"The time is near, the time is near," he

said solemnly. "By the Sign of the Sun and the Sign of the Cross it shall come to pass!" And I saw him pluck from his bosom and unroll before Mammy's eyes a scroll of paper, upon which were inscribed curious figures and signs. The central figures represented a sun and a distinctly although rudely outlined crucifix, traced in some crimson fluid.

"The White Lamb for the Black Sheep!" he continued in loud, resonant tones. "Jehovah is mighty, and he will show that the word of His prophet is true. A token and a sign shall be given; and the rulers shall see, but shall not understand, and the bondman shall know that Nathaniel hath spoken the Word of the Lord!"

He pushed the roll of paper back into its hiding-place as he spoke, and turned towards the door. I sprang lightly and noiselessly from my perch, and crouched behind the trunk of the juniper-tree, which completely screened my small body from view. Here

I waited until the measured tread of the man's footsteps along the gravelly road grew fainter, and at last ceased to be heard.

Very quickly I came to a decision upon one point. Mammy must not know that I had witnessed the interview between herself and her strange visitor. *No one* must know. For my grandfather was a fierce man sometimes; and, if he knew that his orders concerning visitors from other plantations had been disobeyed, Mammy would be punished. Perhaps she would tell me about it: no doubt she would explain what he meant by the "sign and the token." But I would not ask,—at least, not yet.

After a few minutes I entered the cabin with a troubled mind and an aching heart.

"O Mammy," I exclaimed without any previous greeting, "I'm going to have a tutor,—he is coming to-night,—and I am the most miserable girl in Southampton County." And I flung my arms about her neck, and fell to sobbing.

"What hurts Mammy's baby?" she said softly, gathering me close to her heart. "Tell yo' ole Mammy all about it." And she stroked back the tangled hair from my feverish forehead with a soothing touch.

With tears and sobs I told my story.

"Dar now, honey," she said consolingly, "don' you fret. Men folks *is* cu'jus, but dey easier ter git along wid den women is. Besides, you oughter be mighty smart an' know er heap when you grows up. All de ladies 'bout will mos' die kaze dey ain' as smart as my lamb gwine ter be when she gits ter be Mist'is uv Winston Manor."

By which it will be seen that Mammy did not always inculcate the highest motives and incentives to duty in my youthful mind. The suggestion of some day being the envy of the county ladies was decidedly pleasing. Undoubtedly, something might calmly be endured for such a result. I dried my eyes on a corner of Mammy's apron, and grew more composed in my mind.

Mammy had just taken a hot sweet potato from the hearth, when we heard loud voices near the door.

"Take that, you black sneak! I'll show you what you'll get for disobeying my orders!" And the quickly repeated lashes of a heavy whip smote the air. My heart gave a terrible bound, and I felt my lips blanch; for I knew what that sound meant: some negro was being whipped.

We both rushed to the door. Mr. West, the new overseer, held aloft a long cowhide whip over the bared and blood-stained back of a young negro man.

"O Lord! O Lord!" groaned Mammy. "It's Lame Jim!"

My heart seemed to burst within me as I saw the leathern thong descend upon the cripple's shoulders.

"Stop!" I cried. "*You coward!*" And I rushed between the writhing figure of the helpless culprit and the infuriated white man.

Mr. West was blind with rage, and so sudden was my movement that almost simultaneously the blow from the uplifted lash fell upon my own shoulders. An agony of pain shot through my body, as I felt the warm blood gush from my tender flesh, a dimness came over my eyes, and I fell forwards in a swoon upon the ground. When I opened my eyes, I was lying on Mammy's bed, and Mammy was holding a camphor bottle to my nose.

"See dar!" she said in a trembling voice, as I stirred. "Now you'se better." And she fanned me vigorously with a turkey-wing fan.

"Water," I gasped faintly, as the dizzy feeling began to return. "Water, please."

"Kin Mammy's baby wait till she run ter de well and gits a nice cool drink?" she inquired anxiously, as she took from a nail in the wall a large gourd dipper.

"Mammy won't be gone no time," she continued reassuringly. "An' den she'll

take her baby right straight ter de house. You jes' shet yo' eyes, honey, an' res' till I git back."

The pain in my shoulder was hard to bear; and, in spite of Mammy's hastily improvised bandages, the blood was still oozing from the wound. I closed my eyes wearily, and wondered how long it would take her to draw the water and return. Some minutes must have elapsed when I was aroused by a slight touch on my shoulder. With a violent start, I looked up, and saw the face of Mammy's visitor bending over me.

As in a nightmare, I tried to cry out, but could not.

For an instant one of those strangely spotted hands touched my face, as with a swift movement he traced a circle on my forehead. The end of the brown finger was red and moist from the contact with my bleeding shoulder.

Once more I made an agonised effort to

call Mammy, but the word died on my tongue. The solemn eyes held me with their singular power. Was I awake or was this just a dream? I could not tell. Suddenly he spread out his hands as in prayer, and I heard him say, "Lord Jesus, behold the mark!"

Then he turned and went towards the door, casting a grotesque shadow on the sunlit floor. As he disappeared, I heard Mammy's voice calling Daphne. When her turbanned head appeared in the doorway, my overstrained nerves gave way. "Don't let him touch me again! Take me away, take me away!" And for the second time that day the world was a blank, and I was but the shell of a soul.

When I recovered consciousness, I was on the lounge in my grandmother's morning-room; and my grandmother herself was kneeling by me, chafing my hands, while my grandfather held a flask of whiskey to my lips. Mammy was rubbing my feet;

and all the house servants were standing around, with pallid, awe struck faces.

"What's the matter with everybody?" I asked slowly, as I opened my eyes and struggled to rise. The pain in my neck and shoulders was very great when I moved, and I sank back. I remembered now what had happened. Of course, they were angry with me. Grandfather hated anything like a scene, and — somehow I could not collect my thoughts. Everything seemed floating away from me.

"I hope you're not very angry. I couldn't help it — I" —

"Angry? No, child: no one is angry." And there was something in my grandfather's voice I had never heard before.

"I am so glad," I whispered. "I could not bear to see Lame Jim whipped."

I felt something upon my hand; and, looking down, I saw two great tears drop from my grandmother's half-shut eyes.

"You must not talk now, dear," she said gently.

"Wait a moment," said my grandfather suddenly. "Cynthy, go tell Mr. West I want him to come to me at once, here; and, Rhoda, you may bring Jim in also."

The negroes glanced from their places along the walls at the master, with timid wonder in their eyes. Something strange was happening. I was dimly conscious that an unusual scene in which I was to play a prominent part was to be enacted in my grandmother's morning-room. But I was too weary to think much. So I closed my eyes, and wondered what he was going to do with Mr. West and the boy.

I do not know how long it was before I was aroused by the master's voice, which was low but very distinct, as he said slowly,—

"By whose order, Mr. West, did you presume to inflict chastisement upon one of my negroes?"

I opened my eyes, and saw the pale, terrified face of the overseer, who stood cower-

ing before my grandfather. The man's nostrils twitched as he tried to speak, but no sound came from his lips.

"Can't you speak, you cur?"

"He — Lame Jim, sir — went to Nat Turner's meetin'; and you had give strict orders *none* of 'em should go, sir," stammered the man, desperately. "I hope, sir, I was but doin' my dooty."

"*Damn* your duty!" said my grandfather. "You are discharged from any further 'duty' on my plantation. Now I give you one hour's time in which to pack your belongings and leave."

Mr. West's jaw dropped as he heard this unexpected command.

"I am sorry, sir," he said humbly. "I never meant to touch the little mistress: I never seen her till it was too late."

"I forgive you for what you did to me," I said; for I was sorry for the creature. "You did not mean to do it, I know; but, oh, how could you be so cruel!" And I

shivered as I remembered the writhing, blood-stained boy.

"O Mr. West," I said, suddenly raising myself up, "promise me you never will strike a cripple slave any more; and I'll forget that you struck me!"

The man looked at me for a moment with a strange look in his eyes.

"I was mad, crazy mad," he said; "but I promise you, Miss, never to hit a lame nigger again as long as I live."

"I am glad you struck me *now!* Good-by, Mr. West!"

I held out my hand to him. A flood of crimson mantled his face for a moment; and he looked towards my grandfather, not knowing whether to shake hands with me or not. My grandfather nodded his head. The overseer clasped my hand in his, and then turned and left the room.

"Where's Jim?" I asked.

"Here he is," answered my grandmother, as Mammy entered the room, followed by the

cripple. The boy looked from one to another of us in a dazed fashion, as if not knowing what further punishment was in store for him.

"Please, sir, Massa, I neber bin but oncet; an' I neber hearn what Mr. West done said 'bout our gwine ter meetin's," he gasped.

"Do you know what I am going to do with you, Jim?" asked my grandfather.

"Is you gwine ter — sell — me,— Massa?"

There was a note of desperation in the boy's voice, as the words fell one by one from his ashy lips.

The master went to his desk, and began to write.

As the goose-quill moved over the paper, I began to feel a strange sense of suffocation at my heart. My grandfather laid down his quill at last, and, holding up the paper, read the following words: —

"This is a deed of conveyance by which I do from this day and hour settle upon my granddaughter, Penelope Contesse Winston, the slave known on my plantation as 'Lame Jim.' Given over my hand and seal this fifth day of October in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and thirty.

"CHARLES CHRISTOPHER WINSTON."

There was a silence in the room as he finished reading the document.

"Saunders shall come to-morrow and make a legal record of this deed," he continued. "And now, Jim, you belong to Miss Penelope: she can do what she pleases with you."

A low sob of joy broke from the boy's lips as the meaning of the sentence dawned upon him.

"Rhoda," said my grandmother, "put Miss Penelope to bed at once, and give her a soothing draught. She must have no further excitement to-day."

With a wave of her hand the servants were dismissed, and a moment later I was being borne in Mammy's strong arms to my own bedroom upstairs.

Chapter III.

"WHAT does he look like?" I inquired anxiously, as I swallowed my last bit of buttered waffle and chicken and pushed back the silver tray from my bedside; for by my grandmother's express command I was taking my breakfast in bed. Indeed, I was scarcely in a condition to be up; for, besides the pain caused by the long, deep cut across my neck and shoulders, the excitement of the day before had left me in a low and prostrated condition of mind and body.

Mammy plumped up my pillows and straightened the bed-covers leisurely before replying to my question.

"Is you worryin' 'bout dat teacher-man, honey? La! chile, you needn't have no fear! He's an out-'n-out gentleman same as Master, dough dey *do* say he come f'om de Norf! He done give Primus fifty cents fer totin' his traps upstairs."

"The North! Then he is a Yankee!"

"He look like a sho' 'nuff gentleman, anyhow," said Mammy, positively.

"Is he ugly, Mammy?"

"What diffrunce he looks mek ter you?" she inquired sharply.

"It makes a great deal of difference," I replied, unabashed. "I like handsome people, and I don't like ugly people."

"Pretty is as pretty does," quoth Mammy, rebukingly.

"That's not so," I said with a trifle more of decision than courtesy. "Mary, Queen of Scots, and Cleopatra were beautiful and very bad, besides ever so many other history people. I don't believe that anybody really thinks that, either," I proceeded discoursingly.

"Dey don' have niggers up dar whar he come f'om, do dey?" she asked irrelevantly, as she brushed the tangles out of my hair.

"No," I replied contemptuously. "They haven't got plantations or slaves or anything, and they do their own work!"

"Dar's heaps of money up dar, I reck'n?"

"Money!" I cried. "I hate money! And I wish this horrid man was not a Yankee!"

I flung myself down violently in the feathery depths of my bed, forgetting my wound. A sharp little cry burst from my lips. In an instant Mammy had lifted me out of the bed and was holding me as tenderly as an infant in her strong arms.

"Mammy's po' little lamb!" she said softly, as she rocked me back and forth. "Mammy's little lamb, what suffered fer de black sheep!"

There was a passion of fervour in the old woman's voice that frightened me.

"Put me down!" I cried. "You talk like that strange man!"

A swift gleam of terror swept over her face for a moment.

"Missy, is you out yo' hade? What you talkin' 'bout?"

I instantly remembered my determination not to speak of what I had seen and heard.

"Oh, nothing much," I answered in an embarrassed voice. And then, hating anything like a lie, I continued: —

"Only I heard a strange black man yesterday talking about 'signs and tokens,' and he said something about the 'white lamb for the black sheep.' And I saw him again when you went to get the water, — or I dreamed *that* part, maybe, — and what you said reminded me of it, that's all."

"La!" said Mammy, with a laugh. "You mus' have heerd dat ole 'stracted nigger Moses's foolishness!"

She watched me narrowly as she spoke. Now I knew Uncle Moses well enough.

"No: it was not Uncle Moses, Mammy. I heard him talking to *you;* but you needn't care, for I promise on my word of honour I will never tell a single soul."

"You's right, honey! Don' say nuth'n' 't all 'bout it. I don' know what he meant,

Lord knows! 'Twasn't nuth'n' but crazy, foolish talk, I reck'n; but don' tell nobody, kaze it might git more'n one inter trouble."

"A Winston's word is as good as any man's oath, my grandfather says. I promised not to tell, and I won't."

"Lord bless you!" said Mammy, as she tucked me snugly up again.

After Mammy had taken her departure, my mind grew troubled. Nobody was really true. Everybody had something to hide. Why was the world like this?

My grandmother came up later, and brought me a bag of chestnuts and some fresh ginger-cakes,—an unusual attention on her part. And my grandfather, too, came up to my little white room, and, sitting by my bedside, gave me a detailed account of the raccoon hunt of the night before,—a pastime of the negroes in which I always took a lively interest.

Nothing was said about the new inmate of the house except in a very general way,

and for some unaccountable reason I dared not ask any questions. I was to begin lessons on Monday: that was settled.

It was now Friday, and I began to calculate how many pages of grammar and geography might be reviewed within these three days of grace. I was a little relieved when my grandparents left me, and I began studying violently. This particular line of mental effort was, however, so unusual that I grew exhausted in a short time. How stupid school-books were! How much nicer it was to learn facts about places and things in books of travel and history!

Of course, Mr. Basil Mortimer knew a great deal about everything. He would — and justly, perhaps — think me a little fool.

I knew I was *not* a fool, and my face grew hot and crimson at the very thought.

It was dismal enough up there all alone. I wished I might have a game of cards with Black Ailsie and Uncle Domino. I reflected. In the afternoon I tried to read

some of my favourite stories, but even "The Castle of Otranto" seemed insipid. I decided to get up and dress myself. But how could I hide that ugly scar on my neck? Unfortunately, my frocks were all cut half low, as was the fashion for children's gowns in those days. I turned the key softly in the lock. Mammy would think I was asleep if she knocked and I did not answer. Then I took from the innermost recesses of my mother's hair trunk, which always stood in my room, an old-fashioned neck-kerchief, bordered with Valenciennes lace. It would look very nice; but, then, what did it matter? Nobody would see me. But, still, I would take a little exercise and perhaps I might catch a glimpse of my tutor.

"I *would* like to see him," I said to myself, as I pinned the yellowed folds of the mull kerchief over my breast, and viewed the reflection of my small person in the mantel mirror rather doubtfully. I stepped out into the hall, and leaned over the banis-

ters. A cheerful fire blazed on the hearth downstairs, and threw red gleams across the polished oak floor. Now was my chance. There was no one there. The face in the Dutch clock on the landing seemed to grimace at me from its corner among the shadows, as I ran down the stairway and crept into the library.

It was growing late.

I pushed aside the old-fashioned red damask curtains from the deep-silled window, and gazed out at the evening sky. I had been standing there for some time, watching the fantastic cloud shapes, when I suddenly heard voices at the door. I drew the ample draperies closer, until I was completely concealed from view.

"As I was saying," I heard my grandfather say earnestly, as he motioned his companion to be seated in a great arm-chair directly within my visual range from my hiding-place, — "as I was saying, Mr. Mortimer, I find it absolutely impossible to

allow them to have any intercourse with the slaves on the adjoining plantations. This negro preacher, Nat Turner, is demoralising every darky in Southampton County; and I intend to be very strict in regard to the enforcement of my orders. I don't see what Travis meant when he educated Nat as he did. The fellow's singing and praying is a nuisance to the whole county. I shall ride over to Belmont to-morrow, and have a talk with Travis. It will not do, I say."

"Singing and praying would not seem to be very incendiary," said Mr. Mortimer, with a smile.

"You don't know the race," said my grandfather. "They are as easily excited as children; and the fellow has a curious sort of influence over them, which is not for their good."

"Is he a man of intelligence?"

"Yes. As I said, Travis, his owner, was fool enough to have him taught. He is far above the average negro in intelligence.

As a result of what Travis calls his experiment, Nat is holding conventicles, and the negroes are getting what they call 'religi'n' all around here."

"Religion is not a bad thing to have," said the Northerner, reflectively. "But, as you say, Mr. Winston, I do not know the race."

"I have been annoyed a good deal lately," continued the master of Winston Manor. "One of my negroes, a cripple, went to his last meeting; and my overseer, an Ohio man I had just taken into my employ, whipped him. It was a cowardly thing to do, and I discharged the fellow at once. My grand-daughter interfered when she heard West beating the boy, and received an ugly cut herself in the effort to save him. That girl of mine has spirit, I can tell you!"

"How did it happen?" asked the tutor, a note of unmistakable interest in his voice. And then, with flaming cheeks, I heard my

grandfather recount the scene of the day before.

I was an eavesdropper,—something almost as bad as a thief! How I wished to escape! But I could not: I dare not!

The tutor listened quietly to the story. Then he said:—

"You must be proud of this little granddaughter of yours. She has a very noble nature, I am sure!"

"She is every inch a Winston," said my grandfather, unconscious of the vanity of the remark.

Mr. Basil Mortimer smiled. Virginians were so inordinately proud of themselves, was probably his thought.

Through a narrow opening of the curtains I could see the outline of a tall, muscular figure and a blond head. There was silence in the room for the space of a few moments. My grandfather kicked a half-burnt log of wood in the fireplace with his boot-heel, and a storm of red sparks flew up the chim-

ney. Mr. Mortimer turned his head. I saw the profile of an oval face, ending in a King Charles beard of golden brown, a high forehead, over which hair of the same colour lay carelessly parted, and caught a brief glimpse of a pair of hazel eyes.

"I never understood that child," said my grandfather, musingly. "She is the last of the family. I have no heir to carry on the name. Her birth was a bitter disappointment: I wanted a grandson."

He sighed.

"I think that perhaps you may learn to forget that there was a disappointment," said Mr. Basil Mortimer, quietly. "A noble nature like hers is rare."

I felt a thrill of joy at my heart, and then suddenly an agony of shame. If he knew I was hidden behind those curtains, listening to a conversation not intended for me to hear, he would never, never think me noble again.

Just then the tea-bell rang.

"Come," said my grandfather. "We shall find my wife in the dining-room."

As they disappeared through the hall door, I issued from my hiding-place, and sped with nimble feet up the stairway and into my own room. With trembling fingers I took off my clothes and crept into bed.

Mammy came in softly, bearing my tea. But I pretended to be asleep; that is, I did not move or stir. After she had gone, I rose up and knelt down by the window.

"Please, God, make me suffer; for I have been a very wicked child," I prayed. "If I confess my sin, will you forgive me? For Jesus' sake, Amen."

Then I laid my burning, throbbing head on the pillow, and fell into a troubled, broken sleep, in which I dreamed that I was being tried for high treason against the king of the United States, and that my grandfather was the bailiff and Mr. Basil Mortimer the justice.

When I awoke next morning, a stream of

sunshine was pouring in through the open shutter of my window. I got out of bed and walked over to look out. Down a turn of the lane I could see grandfather's tall top-buggy disappearing. He was leaning forward, out of it, and pointing with his whip to some object in the tobacco fields to the right.

"Where is grandfather?" I asked Mammy, who came in at this moment to curl my hair.

"He an' dat man hev druv to de Cote House," she replied. "I 'spec' dey done gone ter git de papers made out fer Jim."

"Oh, yes. I suppose that's it. You must make Jim some new shirts; and I will knit him some socks, now he belongs to me. Only I wish" —

And then I stopped. Mammy would not understand.

"I want to get some persimmons to-day," I continued. "I am going with Daphne and Celeste and Charity, and I wish you would put up a lunch for us."

"Ole Miss sesso?"

"She hasn't yet, but she will."

My excursions with the little negroes had become a sort of established custom with me, although grandmamma was always threatening that she would put a stop to them because of the very evident effect such association had upon my English. But, as I never believed she would, I did not mind.

On this particular morning permission was the more readily granted on account of the fact that in a short time I would be too busy for such recreation. So, after a rather hurried breakfast, I started off, followed by my small attendants, who bore upon their heads baskets in which the persimmons were to be stowed. We must have looked like a procession from an antique frieze.

When we arrived at the tree which we were to attack, we sat down to rest; for it was quite warm. I took off my pink sunbonnet, and fanned myself with it.

"I sholy wishes *I* was white!" remarked

Daphne, gazing admiringly at my pale face. "Cynthy say Mis' Semiramis say black folks tu'ns white when dey dies. Cynthy say she done wish she was dade."

"What nonsense!" I replied scornfully.

Miss Semiramis Dove was the seamstress at the manor, and was held in great esteem by the negroes.

"Miss Pensie, is niggers gwine ter Heben?" inquired Charity, rolling her eyes up until only a rim of white was visible.

"Of course, if they are good," I answered uneasily. "Don't roll your eyes like that. You make me shiver."

"I'th gwine ter be good, tho I kin be Mith Penthie'th maid an' tote her harp for her," lisped Celeste, with a delighted grin.

"We don't know whether we shall any of us go to heaven," I replied severely. "But who is going to climb the tree?"

"I is!" and "I is!" and "I ith!" came in a chorus. And immediately three nimble, supple figures began the ascent.

"I ain't gwine ter stop till I gits clean up ter de top uv dis tree," said Daphne, emphatically, as she swung herself from limb to limb. "Miss Pensie, you kin pick 'em up when dey draps!"

And so vigorously did my handmaids shake that I found it quite a task to gather the fruit as it fell.

"Somebody get down and help me," I called.

"I'th comin'," said Celeste, who was growing weary of her high place; and she dropped herself lightly down, and stood before me, grinning.

"When we get these baskets full, we will have dinner," I remarked. And, with Celeste's assistance, the baskets were soon filled.

"Come down, you all! I am hungry," I called. We fell upon Mammy's lunch with keen appetite.

"Over yander is de Big Dizmal," said Daphne, contemplatively, nodding her head

in the direction of the swamps. "Dere's copperheads an' rattlesnakes an' black whuppers in dat place." And she made a gesture of disgust.

"An' dere's bones dere,—bones uv niggers what runned off an' was los' in de cypress knees, an' couldn' git out no mo'!" added Charity. "Unc' Moses seen er nest uv rattlesnakes in er skelerton dar one time!"

"Dar wuth a woman onthet, an' she wuth whupped by a black thnake; an' the thnake whupped an' whupped till it tail drap off, an' the woman thay,—

'Hade uv you black thnake,
Foller yo' tail,
Ur yo' blud will kiver
De mark uv yo' trail';

An' den itth hade drap off, an' the woman run home, an' the fire wuth bu'nin' blue kathe the devil wuth aroun'!"

"That's a dreadful lie you're telling,

Celeste," I said severely. "Don't you know that it is very wicked to tell lies?"

"I know itth wrong fer white folks," replied the mendacious Celeste, placidly. "But nobody don' tek no 'count uv what niggerth thay. In courthe, *you* never doth nuthin' bad, kathe you're a little white lady."

Yes, I was a lady; but was it true that I never did anything bad? I thought of the day before, and I hated myself.

"Yes, I do do wrong sometimes; and it's a great deal worse in me," I said humbly. "But it's getting late, and I am tired. Let's go home."

As we trudged along, Daphne started a hymn in which we all joined. High and shrill, yet not without a singular sort of melody, were our voices as we sang:—

"Washt in de blud uv de Lamb,
Washt in de blud we'll be;
An' den we'll sing lak Moses sing,
When we f'om de bonds is free,
When we f'om de bonds is free!"

Chapter IV.

"I DECLAR' ter gracious, I ain't neber seed sech er chile fer t'arin' close," complained Mammy, as she began to sew up a long rent in my best plaid muslin frock. "Fust time dat teacher-man see you, too."

"Well, I couldn't help the briers and burrs," I replied meekly.

"You got no business 'mongst briers an' burrs. He'll think you b'longs ter wil' folks, sho'." Mammy was exceedingly sensitive as to the impression I made upon strangers, as she regarded my good or bad appearance as reflecting credit or discredit upon herself.

Her last words irritated me. "I don't care what he thinks," I replied hotly. "I wish he was *dead*, I do!"

Mammy dropped her spool and scissors, and gazed upon me with an expression of grave rebuke.

"Dat's wicked, Missy. Turrible wicked

ter wish anybody dade. What harm he done ter you?"

As I had no specific charge to make, I was silent.

"The Lord hol's people ter account what meks sech wishes, too; an' I 'spec' you'll be sorry fer talkin' so 'fo' you're done."

"I'm not sorry yet," I replied obstinately.

"Mebbe you ain't; but mebbe you ought ter be, an mebbe you will be 'fo' long." There was a pause after this half-threatening hint.

I wanted to ask why, but forebore, as I saw that she felt she had made an impression. I wondered if she divined my future humiliation.

"He done brung Jim a crutch wid er red shoulher-res' pad in it for to go under de arm," she remarked presently.

"Who?"

"Who?" she echoed. "Why, dat teacher-man."

"Did he, Mammy?" I asked with a very decided tremor in my voice. "Oh, I am so glad!"

"Yes. Stand still, chile, or I neber will git yo' h'ar combed. An' Jim sholy is proud. An' 'Whosoeber hateth his brother widout er cause is in danger uv *hell-fire*.'"

Although apparently quite irrelevant, I felt keenly the application and connection of these last words. Mammy tied my sash, and adjusted my nankeen cape properly, but in silence. "Now you'se ready. Go 'long, fo' yo' grandma send fer you." I paused irresolutely for a moment; and then, clasping my arms about the old woman's neck, I said humbly: "I'm sorry, Mammy, for the wicked words, — not on account of the hell-fire, but because he gave Jim the crutch." And then I ran out of the room, for the breakfast gong was sounding.

At the bottom step of the stairs I stopped. Through the half-open door I could see my grandfather and Mr. Mortimer, as they stood before the fire, talking.

"Penelope, is that you?" called my grandmother. And, thus bidden, I entered the room with my heart beating a tattoo against the stiffly-starched serenity of my nankeen cape. "This is Penelope Winston, my grand-daughter," she said to Mr. Mortimer, as I advanced shyly. "Go forward, Penelope, and speak to Mr. Mortimer."

Mr. Mortimer's hazel eyes gave me a friendly look of encouragement. So I made a stiff little curtsy, and then put forth a small hand, which was instantly clasped in a firm, warm grasp.

"So this is my pupil?" he said with a smile. "I hope we shall be friends." And then we sat down to breakfast.

"His face is nice," was my mental comment; "and his eyes are kind. Perhaps it may not be so very dreadful, after all." The prospect was not altogether gloomy, and I began to feel somewhat at ease.

"How does it happen that you strayed so far as Virginia?" asked my grandmother, as she poured the coffee.

"I was not quite well for some time after I left Harvard," he replied. "And, when I heard through Major Appleton that you wanted a tutor, I was very glad indeed to offer myself in that capacity."

"So you know Appleton, do you?" broke in my grandfather. "A fine fellow he was when I knew him, thirty-five years ago, at West Point. We were close friends in those old days; and, although we have gone our different ways in life,— he stuck to the army, while I gave up my commission to take charge of the estate when my father died,— still we write to each other now and then, and have exchanged visits during the long interval."

"So he told me," answered Mr. Mortimer.

"It is a difficult matter to get a gentlewoman for a governess here. So I made a bold stroke, and decided to get a tutor instead. It was a sort of surprise party, wasn't it?" My grandfather laughed.

"Yes, I confess I expected a boy pupil."

A shadow crossed my grandfather's face, and he sighed.

I glanced up at him with unconscious appeal in my eyes, perhaps. I was a disappointment to everybody. Even this strange man had "expected" me to be a boy.

"I am very glad that I was mistaken."

Mr. Mortimer's eyes were looking straight into mine, and I felt that he had read my thoughts.

"Penelope is like her mother's family," said my grandmother, glancing at me in a somewhat critical way.

As she spoke, my tutor's eyes involuntarily glanced from my face to the line of family portraits that hung on the walls. Generations of my ancestors, some in red coats, some bewigged and powdered, but all bearing the family characteristics in their regular, proud features, met the New Englander's gaze.

"Who is that?" he asked suddenly, as

he pointed to a portrait over the sideboard in the corner,—"that beautiful face, over there?"

"That is a portrait of my son's wife, Penelope's mother," she said coldly.

"Ah!" said Mr. Mortimer. "I might have known."

"I shall have to ride over the fields this morning," remarked my grandfather. "Perhaps Penelope can show you about the place a bit."

"Will you?" asked Mr. Mortimer, looking straight at me. "I should like to look over the books first in the library, if you will help me?"

"Yes," I answered. A sudden recollection of my last experience in the library made my voice sound rather reluctant.

"Would you rather not?" asked Mr. Mortimer. I shook my head. "Then come now," he said; for my grandmother had risen from the table. And I went with him without a word.

Among the books I was quite at ease; and I soon found myself chatting about my favourite authors, heroes, and heroines. I was quite pleased and surprised to discover that we agreed about a number of things.

"Isn't it nice that we like the same books?" I inquired, as I sat down on the step-ladder, a round or two below him.

"Very nice, indeed! I hope we are going to be good friends."

I did not answer for several minutes. I turned over the leaves of a large illustrated copy of "King John," in great confusion, remembering my words to Mammy.

"Perhaps you would not want to be friends with me if you knew something I said about you," I said at last, in a very low voice.

"Something you said about me?" said my companion, in a puzzled tone. "What was it?"

"Something very wicked. I said — that I wished you were dead!"

Mr. Mortimer looked at me wonderingly.

"I have wished the same thing myself sometimes," he said with a sigh. "But why should you?"

"I don't! Indeed, indeed, I don't!" I cried out eagerly. "I was angry because I thought you were — were — well, not a bit like you are," I stammered desperately.

"Well, then we are even. You thought I was an ogre, and I am not quite so bad as that; and I thought you were a noisy, troublesome boy, and here you are a little girl, who likes to read books. I call it a fair exchange, don't you?" He did not seem in the least offended, and this added to my contrition.

"I am very sorry," I said. And then I added, "If you should get scarlet fever or small-pox or anything catching, you know, I would nurse you through it to make up for what I said."

"Perhaps you can make amends some other way; but, anyway, I forgive you,

Now don't you think, on the whole, that we can be friends?"

"Yes."

"Then we shall be?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's a bargain."

"I am glad you're different,—not like what I thought you would be," I remarked candidly, after this agreement had been ratified by a hand-shake.

"How did you think I should look?" inquired my tutor, with some curiosity in his voice. "Like the ogre?"

"Oh, no,—but different."

"How?"

"Not so much like the prince in the fairy-tale book," I admitted. "You look very much like him, only not quite so"—I paused abruptly on the brink of an unflattering bit of discrimination.

"'Not quite so' what?" demanded Mr. Mortimer.

"Not *quite so* handsome," I replied, trying very hard to palliate the truth.

"Still you see a resemblance?" asked Mr. Mortimer, gravely.

"Oh, yes: it's very strong."

"Well, I could not expect to be up with the prince in good looks." And he laughed. At this moment the jingle of my grandmother's keys was audible.

"Now I must go," I said decidedly; "for grandmamma will be here in a minute, and, besides, I must get my collect for to-morrow."

"Tell me first what made you change your mind," he said, barring the way down the ladder with his arm.

"I think it was the crutch."

"Was that all?"

"The crutch and — other things," I replied indefinitely, as I stepped down.

As the mistress of the house appeared through one door, I made my exit through the other; for I knew that Daphne and Celeste were outside, impatiently waiting for me to join them. In the afternoon my

grandfather and Mr. Mortimer drove over to a neighbouring plantation to look at some blooded stock that the master of Winston Manor had long coveted, and was now trying to purchase. As they did not get back until long after my bedtime hour, I did not have any further talk with Mr. Mortimer until the next day. But the sense of my own unworthiness was so strong upon me that I was much less imperious than usual with my humble playfellows, and made so many concessions to the trio that they immediately took advantage of my amiability to inveigle me into a promise to go with them on Sunday afternoon to "min' de gap." Now "minding the gap" was something of a cynosure; and, as it relieved the little negroes from the more arduous tasks of cleaning knives, weeding the garden-beds, or that most uncongenial of all duties, "totin' water fer Mammy," this occupation was eagerly sought.

At all times and seasons there were cer-

tain places in the enclosures that separated those parts of the plantation that were being cultivated, from the grazing fields that were broken down. These openings, or "gaps," had to be guarded by relays of little negroes, who found lolling under the trees, with nothing more to engage their energies than an occasional sortie upon some stray sheep or cow, a most agreeable occupation.

I had some misgivings as to whether Sunday were a proper time for such an excursion; but, as I felt sure I could gain my grandmother's consent if I surprised her with a perfect recitation of my Bible and Prayer-book lessons, I gave a half-way promise to my insistent companions, and then retired to my room to absorb as much of the Litany and Thirty-nine Articles as I deemed necessary to propitiate my grandmother.

Chapter V.

SUNDAY dawned hot and cloudless. It seemed as if the spirit of midsummer had come back to remind us of the lilies and roses that had died by the breath of the frost; and the autumnal colouring of leaf and stalk looked vulgarly garish and untimely in the hot, quivering air. Such days are known sometimes in the advanced autumn season in Virginia. I had eclipsed my own expectations in regard to my Sunday morning exercises. Indeed, my grandmother's pleased surprise at my prompt replies and repetitions was not flattering to my usual attempts in this line of effort; but, since my glibness had attained the desired permission to accompany Charity, Daphne, and Celeste on their projected pilgrimage, I did not care very much.

"Now that I see that you *can* give me perfect recitations," she had remarked, "I shall not put up with any more slipshod

ones. Remember that, Penelope; and, furthermore, after this afternoon there are to be no more Sunday tramps with the negro children. You may go to-day, as it is the end of your holiday. I think we shall probably dine with your cousin Kitty Braxton to-day. So be a good, discreet child until we get home."

After this and sundry other injunctions, my grandmother, who was a most punctilious churchwoman, hurried downstairs, and after much coaxing persuaded my grandfather to get into the carriage. This was the invariable routine every Sunday morning. It always ended, after a series of gradually weakening objections and excuses, in my respected grandfather's allowing himself, in more than one sense of the word, to be driven to church.

Mr. Mortimer had boldly announced his intention of devoting the morning to letter-writing; and my grandmother was obliged to accept the announcement without a word,

though she showed such cold disapproval in her face that he looked like a culprit as he bade her "good-morning" at the carriage window.

I had escaped by virtue of my recent indisposition, due to the incident of the previous Thursday. I think my grandparents must have requested that no mention should be made to me concerning the affair; for, to my intense relief, nobody said a word to me about it.

Dinner was a short affair. Mr. Mortimer was preoccupied and silent, and I felt all of my old shyness envelop me as in a garment, while Miss Semiramis Dove sat at the side table and poured the tea.

Hurrying as much as decorum allowed, I excused myself and ran out on the lawn, where more agreeable company was awaiting me.

As the result of a process at the hands of their respective "mammies," and known in the quarters as "cardin'," the heads

of my three comrades had undergone a mysterious and sudden change. Relieved from their "wrappings" of white cotton thread, which had held innumerable small tufts of short crinkly hair in bondage, each head was now crowned with an enormous mat of black wool, that stood out stiffly all around, and appeared utterly to dwarf the diminutive figure that seemed scarcely sufficient to support the structure.

Unconscious of any such startling effect, Daphne, Celeste, and Charity, resplendent in their Sunday frocks and bead necklaces, hastened to greet me.

"I gwine ter keep dis side uv Missy!"

"I gwine ter keep in front, an' hol' de brambles back for her!"

"I ith gwine ter walk behin' her, tho I kin walk in her tracks!" were the exclamations of my guides, as we set out upon our journey.

"How far is it?" I asked, looking down rather dubiously at my low red shoes.

"La! 'tain't no ways ter de gap atter you pass de stile," said Daphne. And, as I did not wish to seem lacking in physical strength, I did not inquire anything further about the distance to the stile. We had not gone far when I heard the thumpety-thump of a crutch on the gravelly path.

Daphne began to roll her eyes ominously.

"Who want you hobblin' along here?" she inquired, as Lame Jim joined us.

"I thought mebbe Missy mout be skeered uv de ole ram," he said apologetically.

"Ain't nobody 'feered uv dat ole ram, lessen it's you," was the rejoinder. "You jes go 'long back whar you come f'om."

But this did not please me.

"*I* want him," I said decisively. "And you ought to be more polite," I said to Daphne. "Come on, Jim."

Now my handmaidens were jealous of Jim's recent distinction. So they began to persecute him forthwith. Daphne surreptitiously kicked the dust over him as she

went along; while Celeste and Charity were solicitous in their inquiries as to which leg he preferred, the long one, the short one, or the wooden one.

"Very well," I said at last, "Jim belongs to me; and I won't have any one unkind to him. If you all don't stop, I will go straight home."

"Jes' listen to Missy!" cried the diplomatic Celeste. "We jes' foolin'." After which there were no more jibes.

The "gap" was indeed a pleasant spot. A group of oaks made a refreshing shelter where the enclosures had fallen down, and here we seated ourselves on the lichen-covered stones that once had formed a part of the road that separated the grazing fields from the plantation road. A stream ran parallel with the tobacco lands on the other side of the road, making a pleasant sound as it rippled over its rocky bed.

The sleepy cry of a whip-poor-will in the neighbouring thicket, the cough of a squirrel

from some leafy retreat, and the monotonous tap-tap of a persistent woodpecker were the only sounds that broke the stillness. The drowsiness of a summer afternoon fell upon us, and we sat watching the shadows dapple the grassy knoll at our feet in silence.

"Over yonder, whar de smoke's a-puffin', is whar Aun' Mimie live," remarked Daphne, at last, as she pointed to an isolated cabin that stood in the midst of a little corn patch on the opposite side of the brook.

"Why doesn't she live in the quarters?" I inquired. An awed expression appeared in Daphne's face, as she answered, "Aun' Mimie ar er conjure ooman."

"That's very foolish," I said rather sternly. "There is no such thing as 'conjuring.'"

"Mebbe dey ain't, mebbe dey is," persisted Daphne.

"You don't believe in such things, Jim, do you?" I asked, turning to the boy.

Jim shifted his crutch. "Granny say Aun' Mimie works spells an' cha'ms," he said dubiously.

"Oh, you are all afraid of her!" I said with some contempt.

"I ain't afeered," put in Celeste, virtuously. "Kathe er conjure ooman is jes percisthly lak witches. Dey cyant croth water." And Celeste pointed to the stream, which she evidently regarded as a safety line, with a grin.

"Why, Aunt Mimie comes to the quarters almost every day," I reasoned. "So her power is broken." But the three woolly mats shook in unison.

"Huccum her kin work spells, den?" queried Charity.

"She does not do anything of the kind, of course," I asserted. "Isn't the footbridge around the bend?"

"Yes, Miss Pensie, it ar," said Daphne, solemnly. "But I wouldn't cross dat brook an' tech my foot on dat groun',—not fer

nothin'! Aun' Mimie's got er pet rattler over dere."

For a moment I was daunted. But the spirit of adventure was strong upon me that afternoon. So, after some consideration, I said: "I don't believe it. I am not afraid. I am going over there, and ask her if she has a rattlesnake."

A look of terror appeared in the black visages before me. There was a pause, and then Daphne spoke:—

"Well, I ain' gwine nary step! I ain' gwine ter hev it on my min' ter tell Master an' Mistis how it was me what took Miss Pensie over yonder whar she got p'izened by er rattler!" And Daphne assumed a look of grave responsibility.

"Rattlesnake p'izen mek er pusson turned spotted same as er toad," commented Charity; while Celeste wailed, "Mith Penthie ar gwine git us all under der spell, dat what she fixin' fer, sho!"

"I'll go by myself!" I said scornfully. "You are all of you *afraid!*"

"Ef Missy gwine, I gwine 'long wid her," announced Jim, valiantly. "Dis here crutch could brack mos' any rattle's hade, I reckin."

This was a more hopeful outlook, and I manifested due appreciation of Lame Jim's valour and discretion.

"Hear dat thunder a-bellowin'?" asked Celeste, the artful one, presently. "We heap better go 'long home 'fo' de rain ketch us an' sp'ile Mith Penthie's red shoeth."

I looked up. Celeste was certainly right. The sky had suddenly overclouded, and the oppressive atmosphere betokened a storm.

"Well, it's a great deal nearer to Aunt Mimie's cabin than it is to home," I answered. "But, after all, it may not rain until night."

Lame Jim had risen during this conversation. He hobbled over to the edge of the pasture, and surveyed the outstretched fields with keen eyes. As he stood there, suddenly there came to us a long rumbling

sound that made our hearts stand still with terror. A moment later the ground beneath us seemed to vibrate with motion, as the thud of frantic hoofs came nearer and nearer.

"Quick, Missy! Quick!" cried Jim. "Squire Travis's wil' bull done got loose! Run! Run!"

In one terrified glance I saw it all. From the thicket at our left, and bearing down directly upon us, rushed the infuriated animal.

Like a covey of frightened birds, Daphne, Charity, and Celeste were scudding away toward the only visible refuge,— Aunt Mimie's cabin.

My heart beat so that I could scarcely breathe.

"Run, Missy, run!" reiterated Jim. "Don't you wait fer me!" He had discarded his crutch, and, considering his infirmity, was getting over the ground with remarkable speed, though he lagged a yard or two behind me.

We could hear the clank of the iron chain that dangled from a ring in the animal's nose, as it struck against the stones in the road. The ponderous thud of the hoofs, as they tore up the earth in their progress, came nearer and nearer, as we sped on. Only a few yards ahead of us was the foot-bridge that spanned the brook where the banks were highest. Only a few yards be tween us and safety! If we could only reach it! Suddenly a cry broke from my companion:—

"Run, Missy, run! I done played out!" And the boy stumbled and almost fell. For a single instant I wavered. Then a sense of the undying shame of cowardice swept over me. To leave a comrade helpless and in danger, and that comrade my slave and lame! Never! I turned back; and, seizing him by the arm, I began dragging him along, while I called out frantically: "You must run! You *shall* run, I say, or we'll be killed!"

Perhaps my words gave him new courage: perhaps my will dominated him. But, at any rate, he made one last great effort, as we rushed on; for the bull was gaining upon us. On, on! The bridge seemed but a step away, and death was behind!

Just as we reached the goal, a blinding flash of lightning shot across the lowering sky, followed by a deafening crash of thunder. I stumbled and lost my shoe. As I turned my head, I felt the hot breath of our pursuer on my face, while an angry roar filled the air. At the same instant a dwarfish figure sprang out from a clump of sumach bushes, and with Herculean strength hurled a bowlder straight at the animal's head. The creature was stunned apparently. With a quick movement, our deliverer caught up the chain, and, slipping nimbly to one side of the beast, began to utter a monotonous, crooning sort of sound. The bull trembled, and slowly reared its bleeding head. We had stopped midway on the

narrow plank, and stood fascinated by the singular scene.

With one hand the man motioned to us to go on, pointing to the sky and then to the cabin. And we obeyed. I noticed that his hand was spotted, and I knew this was Mammy's visitor.

The rain was falling in great drops by this time; and, with a sigh of gratitude and relief, I knocked boldly at the door of the "conjure woman's" house. The latch was drawn almost instantly. The tall, straight figure of the old woman had something of stateliness in its pose, as she stood in the doorway before us.

"Please, Aunt Mimie, may we come in?" I asked.

The aquiline brown features showed no trace of surprise, as she opened the door and bade us enter. I paused at the door to watch the negro who had saved us walk quietly down the road, leading the bull by the chain.

"Look, look!" I exclaimed in wonder.

"Unc' Nat done it by de spell uv wavin' hands," said Jim, in an awed whisper.

The word "spell" reminded me of our hostess's supposed gifts, and I glanced around at her uneasily. Huddled in a corner on the floor sat the inglorious trio, their faces ashy and their eyes bulging from the sockets.

"So de leel' lady have come to de house of Mimie, de slave?" said the old woman, in sibilant tones, quite unlike the ordinary accent of the negroes on our place.

"Yes," I answered, as I took the chair she offered me. "The bull and the rain drove me; but I would have come, anyway."

A sputtering cough from the corner informed me that Celeste was trying to engage my attention. I looked at her, and saw her eyes fixed in glassy horror on my face. I understood at once that she wished to convey to me that I must not ask Aunt Mimie anything about her occult powers.

"De leel' lady would have come—fer

what?" asked my hostess, eyeing me with grave attention.

This direct question was slightly embarrassing, but I was determined to satisfy myself as far as was possible on certain points.

"I wanted to ask you if you kept a pet rattlesnake,— Daphne said you did,— and if you are a conjurer,— something like the Witch of Endor,— only," I added politely, "not nearly so bad as that, of course."

"Does de leel' lady want ter know what I be?" she said slowly.

"Yes, if you don't mind telling."

"My people know many t'ings in de far-off lan's of de palm an' cocoa trees,— many t'ings white man not know. My fader was Ndongo, de king. He fight. Dey kill him,— de men uv de Mpongue tribe. Dey sell me ter white man: I come on de big ship." She paused for a moment, and I waited breathlessly for her to resume her story. "To-day I am Mimie, de slave. Den I was King Ndongo's chile, de Princess

Tarra Warra. Yes,— wuk in de fiel' in de daytime; but, when de night come, I lays down an' dreams back de palm and de cocoa groves."

My eyes grew moist. I put out a timid hand on the knee of African royalty.

"I am very sorry for you, Princess Tarra Warra."

She bowed her head low on her chest, and muttered some strange words I could not understand.

Lame Jim and the little negroes, who had scarcely heard the old woman's low words, took for granted that she was repeating some incantation over me; and they cowered abjectly in the corner, not daring to move while she spoke. The strange story had filled me with a new and strange sensation. This old woman, who belonged to my grandfather, who worked for him, had once run about naked in her father's bamboo village, savage,— but free! And she was really and truly born a princess!

I was startled from this train of thought when there came a loud knock at the door. Aunt Mimie went forward, and ushered in Mr. Mortimer. He had a waterproof cloak on his arm, and he looked annoyed. "Come," he said. "Miss Semiramis Dove and your nurse are very uneasy about you. The buggy is on the other side." Then, glancing down, he saw that I had on only one shoe.

"I'll come back some day, Aunt Mimie," I said, as I followed Mr. Mortimer out of the door. "Go on ahead," he said to the children; and then, lifting me up in his arms, he carried me across the bridge, and placed me in the buggy. "What's this?" he said, stooping down to pick up something.

Wiping off the mud with a corner of the lap-robe, he handed me a small red shoe. "Here, Cinderella," he said, as he whipped up the horse into a brisk trot. "Now, if this were a coach and four, I would be more like the prince than ever."

But my mind was full of the story of a princess just now; and, as we drove along, I realised afresh that to-morrow I would stand confessed in all my weaknesses.

Chapter VI.

AFTER the first ordeal was well over and my instruction under Mr. Basil Mortimer had fully begun, I gradually grew reconciled to the new order of my life's routine. A sincere friendship had been established between my tutor and myself during the winter, and I was making satisfactory progress in my studies. Mr. Mortimer, who had come to the South to recuperate his physical forces after a long period of work in a Northern University, appeared to enjoy watching the new phases of life that presented themselves in this locality, and was especially interested in what he called "negro characteristics." He and my grandfather used to sit together in the library in the evenings, talking about a great many things that I did not understand exactly. But I always listened, for now and then something would be said that I could comprehend clearly enough to set me think-

ing for days. It was during those winter evening talks, I think, that a new aspect of my surroundings came to my childish mind.

One evening I remember especially. My grandfather and Mr. Mortimer had been discussing the ultimate solution of the problem of a slave population in a republic, and my grandfather's voice sounded grave and troubled.

"The trouble is," he answered in reply to some remark of my tutor, "that your people do not understand the bearings of the matter. I admit that the system is a bad one; but it cannot be abolished except by gradual steps, without terrible and unforeseen results. No: your friend Garrison has the genius of a fanaticism that shapes its course towards one point, regardless of all dangers by the way. Too sudden emancipation would be disastrous alike to master and slave. Hands accustomed to shackles are weak hands, Mr. Mortimer; and the freedom of a race must be achieved, not bestowed."

Mr. Mortimer looked deep into the red heart of the flames before he answered. Then he said slowly: "Remember that the black population of this section is year by year doubling that of the white. Men will not always remain ignorant of their strength. If that freedom be indeed 'achieved,' God pity you!"

I did not know what he meant, but the solemn tone in which the words were uttered gave me the sensation of a vague alarm. My grandfather's next remark was somewhat reassuring.

"You may rest assured nothing of *that* kind will ever be attempted. A movement of that nature requires a leader, and there would be none."

Mr. Mortimer lifted his hazel eyes from the purple flare of a half-burnt cedar log that permeated the room with a faint, incense-like perfume, and gazed earnestly at my grandfather.

"There will arise a Gideon for every

Jericho," he said. "And every nation brings forth an Elisha, who will one day touch the eyes of the multitude, and show them the 'horsemen and chariots' that are round about them."

'Really, Mortimer, you are wasting your talents," quoth the squire of Winston Manor, with a half-cynical, half-indulgent smile. "The rostrum or the pulpit would be the place for you, without doubt."

Mr. Mortimer flushed a little. The most earnest natures are apt to be the most sensitive, because they are usually the least understood, and consequently the most frequently wounded. He felt that his enthusiasm was only a target for good-natured ridicule here. So he curbed the resentment that suggested a sharp retort, and answered pleasantly. Until the enthusiast has arrived beyond the point of mere sentiment, his life must be an isolated one; but, when he has mounted by the paths of physical sacrifice, petty humiliations, and manifold struggles to that

plane above personality, then, indeed, his life becomes united with the divine Source of all life, and is no more isolated or barren. My tutor had not yet learned this truth; and, with the clear insight of childhood, I was unconsciously aware that he was not only misunderstood sometimes, but that he felt that he was. I wondered what he meant by talking about Elisha and Gideon to my grandfather, who never liked to read the Bible, and thought a sermon ought never to last longer than fifteen minutes. "What makes him do it?" I said to myself. "I don't believe grandpapa knows anything about Bible people." And then I went on in an irrelevant way, wondering what Mr. Mortimer meant, and who his "friend Garrison" was. Would it do to ask? It would be a good way to change the subject, anyhow; for somehow I did not want the Scriptural ignorance of my respected relative to stand confessed. So I made bold to say, "Who is your friend Garrison, Mr. Mortimer?"

Both men turned abruptly, and stared at me in a very embarrassing sort of fashion. My grandfather gave a little grunt that I knew was an expression of mixed amusement and annoyance.

"God bless me, Penelope! I thought you had a story-book," he said. "But I am glad you have asked Mr. Mortimer about his 'friend.' Perhaps he can tell you a good deal about him." The old gentleman's voice had a distinctly aggressive note in it. I felt that my good intentions were come to naught, as I turned to Mr. Mortimer.

"Mr. Garrison is a good man, Penelope, who lives in Boston, where I live, you know; and he wants some very sad conditions in the world to be changed."

"In other words," struck in my grandfather, "he's an 'Abolitionist,' my dear; and now it is your bedtime. Such big words and big subjects are beyond a little maid's understanding."

"But what is an 'Abolitionist'?" I in-

quired, as I put my book down slowly. "I think they must be good; for Miss Semiramis Dove says Mr. Mortimer is one, because he reads the Bible aloud to the slaves in the quarters, and teaches some of them."

My simple words had a curious effect. Mr. Mortimer's face grew pale, while my grandfather's countenance took on the unmistakable hue of wrath. "Miss Semiramis Dove is an old fool!" he thundered. "An Abolitionist is a sneaking, meddling fellow that wants to come here and set the negroes free and turn ladies and gentlemen into beggars! Now, Mortimer, you see," he said, turning to my tutor. "I knew how it would be. I have no objection to your making the best of them that can be made; but I warn you, *you are on dangerous ground!*"

"I can hold my own," answered the Northerner. "And, as to the danger, I don't care *that!*" And he snapped his fingers.

"Well, grandpapa," I remarked with a

candour that I did not always use in my ancestor's moments of irritation, "of course, it is very wicked to want to make us poor; but, if those people want to set the slaves free, why, I am an Abolitionist, too!"

"Go to bed! Go to bed!" said my grandfather, sternly. But, as I went up the stairs, I distinctly heard the sound of laughter.

I went to bed with the satisfactory reflection that, at least, I had defined my position in the matter, and with a great deal of thought about what Miss Semiramis Dove had said, and much wondering as to what mysterious dangers lurked about my tutor's path.

But these vague apprehensions gradually faded from my mind and were forgotten, as the long months passed and the daily tenor of our lives was undisturbed by any unusual happening.

Mr. Mortimer's Bible class for the slaves

on Sunday afternoons had become an established custom, but how much benefit resulted therefrom it was not easy to say. My grandfather shrugged his shoulders at the Evangelical experiments, as he called Mr. Mortimer's efforts; and I think my tutor himself sometimes felt that perhaps, after all, my grandmother's simple reading of the Word and Prayer-book ritual was more efficacious than his most earnest talks.

"Young Mars' Mortimer, he mighty fine gen'elman," confided Uncle Isham to me one day. "But it do seem like ole Miss' readin' uv de Lord's own testermony straight f'om de mouf give mo' p'inted noshuns uv Heben an' Hell an' de Jedgement to de righteous sheaves an' de ongodly chaff, honey."

And so, I think, was the case in truth. I pondered much upon this remark of our plantation oracle, and the justice of it recurred to my mind in later years.

As the early spring advanced, Mr. Mor-

timer began teaching me something of botany. His simple, direct method of instruction was well adapted to my mind; and our afternoon excursions into the woods in quest of specimens gave me infinite delight. One evening we had somewhat extended the limits of our usual jaunts, for Mr. Mortimer had promised to show me the anatomy of some wild growth near the swampy region. We had walked quite a distance, and I was beginning to feel tired.

"Let's rest," I said at last. "Over there is an arm-chair big enough for both of us." And I pointed to a great tree not far from us, whose fantastically gnarled and outspread roots formed the outlines of a high-backed seat.

"This is your throne," laughed Mr. Mortimer. And, twisting a branch of wild grape-vine into a chaplet, he placed it upon my head, as I seated myself and removed my shade hat.

"Now you are queen of the realm."

"You must be the king," I said quite simply. Mr. Mortimer smiled.

"So you are willing to share your empire with me? I am afraid I would not be a worthy sovereign of your domain, little girl," he said with a sigh.

"Oh, yes, you are a great deal better than I am," I replied hastily. And then an impulse to tell him all about the evil deed that had all these long months oppressed my conscience seized me.

"Please don't think I am good, Mr. Mortimer. I am not. I did something that was very bad once, — almost as bad as being a liar or a thief. I — I — listened to what was not meant for me to hear. I heard grandfather talking to you the day after you came to the manor, and I heard you say I must be a noble little girl. I did not mean to eavesdrop; but I was behind the curtains in the library, and I was afraid to come out after you came in. You never will think well of me again; but, anyway, I've told

you the truth." And I covered my face with my hands, and tried to hide the tears that stood in my eyes.

Mr. Mortimer placed a firm hand beneath my quivering chin, and turned my scarlet face up to his own.

"Yes: you have not only told the truth, but you have been very true. Try to be brave, and all the rest will follow. Cowardice makes most of the falseness. But I have not shown you the queer little plants yet. Do you know the way here?"

"Oh, yes," I replied. "I have been here with Cynthy and Celeste often." And then we walked on for some distance in silence.

"How queer everything looks!" I exclaimed suddenly. "Look! We are almost in the bog!"

A long stretch of bog-land, intersected by dark pools of water, and thickly studded with a dwarfish pine growth known in this region as "cypress knees," lay to our right. At a

short distance directly in front of us was an extensive lake, or pond, of slimy, stagnant water; while to our left stretched a dense expanse of woodland. Mr. Mortimer looked at his watch, and then at the narrow strip of sky overhead.

"There must be a short cut through to the path we have lost, somewhere near, that will take us back to the plantation," he said cheerfully. But his annoyance, or the shadow, perhaps, made him look pale. "Let us try this way: the manor must be due north of this spot."

The leaves I had gathered fell unheeded from my hand, as Mr. Mortimer took it within his own close grasp. Each step, however, seemed but to increase our difficulties. The growth of trees grew denser; and the soggy, yielding quality of the earth under our feet warned us that we were approaching the dreaded bogs. I shivered as I felt my feet suddenly sink ankle-deep into an ooze of mire.

"We must not attempt to go any farther," said Mr. Mortimer. "Are you frightened?"

"Not very, but my feet are wet and cold."

"The best thing we can do will be to climb up on the boughs of one of those trees there, and wait until they come for us. It will not do for you to stand on this damp ground." He turned and lifted me in his strong arms. "Can you climb?"

"Like a cat," I replied, as I swung myself up from his shoulder on to a branch that grew rather low.

"You come, too."

Mr. Mortimer followed my example, and I could not refrain from laughing at the droll tableau he made.

Night, like a mantle, was enfolding us. I crept closer to my companion.

"What a thin frock you're wearing!" he said, touching my sleeve. And in an instant he had taken off his coat, and wrapped me in it.

"Please don't: you'll freeze," I pleaded.

But I only felt a strong, protecting arm encircle my small shivering form. We were both silent as the slow hours dragged by.

"Somebody will come for us," I kept saying over and over to myself. We were lost in the swamps, certainly; and yet I was not frightened. The damp atmosphere penetrated to my very bones, and I buried my face far down in the collar of my impromptu wrap. I think I must have fallen asleep, for a movement of my companion suddenly aroused me. I opened my eyes, and looked up into my tutor's face. His whole attention was fixed upon some object or objects not far distant. He motioned me to be silent, and my eyes followed his look. Upon a miniature island that rose up from the murky waters of the pond a few yards from our perch a fire was burning. The ruddy glare of firelight revealed to our vision a group of moving figures. In the centre stood the man whose strange personality had twice before so curiously affected

me. His misshapen and distorted body seemed inspired by some supernatural force, as he addressed himself to the half-dozen negroes who were ranged around him. We were near enough to hear distinctly the words he uttered.

"Hear the word of Nathaniel, the Prophet of the Lord God," he said solemnly, in a loud, clear voice.

"That's the man I saw with Mammy," I whispered. "See! He has white spots on his hands!"

As he spoke, the man raised his left arm, and held before the awed eyes of his listeners the same scroll I had seen before.

"I have come to accomplish, my brothers, as well as to foretell," he continued. "The end is at hand. The Sign has been given, — even the Sign of *Blood!* — red drops on the grains of corn, red drops on the oakleaves, red drops on the blades of grass! Blood, — blood, — blood! Everywhere blood!"

The hands of the speaker moved in long, rhythmic strokes as he spoke; and the deep, compelling eyes turned from one to another of the coarse, irresponsible faces before him. As he repeated the last words, his auditors' hands and arms began to wave slowly in unison with his own; and, in thick, imperfect utterance, they repeated the words after him. Gradually the motions of the prophet's hands grew more and more rapid, until they lashed the air.

"The white lamb for the black sheep! Will you swear by the Sign?"

"We sw'ar by de Sign!"

The answer came as from one man, in strained, mechanical voices.

"To follow Nathaniel, and to do the will of the Lord?"

"Ter foller Nathaniel, an' ter do de will uv de Lord!"

"We will swear by blood! We will conquer by blood! Swear!"

As each one of the group stepped forward

and repeated the words, their leader drew from his pocket a penknife, and, tearing open the coarse garment that covered his breast, passed its open blade across his left side. Dipping his index finger in the crimson fluid that welled up, staining his black breast and white shirt, he leaned forward, and made a small red circle on the forehead of each of his followers.

"Mat,— Jake,— Ned,— Pete,— Ike,— and Bill,— you are marked by the Sign: go in peace! Amen!"

For a moment there was silence. Then he waved a dismissal; and each man made his way to the island's edge, and waded across to the opposite shore. When they had disappeared in the shadows of the forest, their leader knelt down, and folded his hands in the attitude of prayer.

"O Lord God," we heard him say, "show Nathaniel the way to the end. It does not matter, Lord, how hard it is or how long it is; and, if the work prepared before all time

for his hand to perform be hard to do, strengthen his arm! O Lord God, give a sign in the heavens when the Day of Redemption is set, so that Nathaniel may know when the Lord is ready. Amen."

Then he went to the water's edge, and, filling a tin cup which hung at his side with the brackish fluid, slowly poured it upon the fire. This operation was repeated until every spark was extinguished. Then he threw the charred remnants of fagots, the dead coals and the heap of ashes into the water. When all traces of the fire had been destroyed, we watched him step into the water, as his companions had done. When the shore was reached, he plunged into the woods, also; but we noticed that he took an opposite direction to that taken by the other negroes.

"What were they doing?" I asked in a half-whisper.

"I cannot say. I suppose it was some superstition they were secretly celebrating.

The leader is evidently a religious fanatic. I think it was very well that we were not seen."

"That must have been Mr. Travis' free negro, Nat. He talks almost like white people, but he's a Voodoo. Did you see him making spells with his hands?"

"Nonsense!" said Mr. Mortimer. "It's possibly a case of unconscious mesmeric influence."

"What is 'mesmeric influence'?" I inquired.

"Something very little known about as yet."

After a short pause he continued: "You know these people, child. Shall we tell what we have seen?"

"No," I answered promptly. "They don't know any better. Nat Turner would be put in jail and the slaves would be whipped, if we did. They are always talking about signs and spells and judgment day: it doesn't hurt anybody."

"Very well, then: we will keep our own counsel."

Just then we heard the bark of a dog in the distance, and in a few moments the sound of voices.

"It's Gladys's bark!" I cried joyfully. "They're coming for us! Make a noise to show where we are."

Mr. Mortimer made a sounding-board of his hands, and gave a long "Hallo!" which was immediately answered; and in a little while a small procession, headed by my grandfather and my boy Jim, appeared in sight. Gladys almost knocked me from my perch in her joy; while Jim exclaimed excitedly, "I done tole you, Massa, dat me an' Gladys could fin' my li'l' Mistis!"

"Thank God!" exclaimed my grandfather, fervently, as he wiped away the perspiration from his forehead. "This night's tramp and doings will end in a fever for you two, I dare say, and in no end of rheumatism for me. A second edition of the

'Babes in the Wood,' lacking the robins. Put on your coat, Mortimer. Here are some shawls for you, Pen."

Now that we were discovered, his irritation found vent. After reiterated questions as to how we had lost the path, to which we could give no satisfactory answer, he remarked,—

"Damme! but what fools you were!"

Neither Mr. Mortimer nor I could gainsay this. So we set out for Winston Manor in silence, too tired to care what anybody said.

Chapter VII.

MY grandfather's prophecy in regard to a case of fever was verified. The exposure of the night spent in the swamps told upon a constitution unaccustomed to the miasmatic lowlands of Virginia, and an acute attack of ague fever kept Mr. Mortimer with us many weeks after my school term expired.

As far as possible, I tried to beguile the tedium of his long convalescence; and my childish prattle did not seem to be disagreeable to him.

I had just set a plate of delicately browned batter-cakes by his lounge in the library, when my grandmother came into the room.

"How very close the air is!" she remarked. "I think we shall have a storm here before long."

I went to the window, and looked out at the sky.

"Even the sunshine looks dark," I said.

"Look!" And I pointed to the floor, where a bar of bluish light lay.* Our faces in the mirror over the mantel were of a ghastly pallor. Mr. Mortimer got up, and followed me to the window. The same singular effect was visible everywhere outside.

"It must be an eclipse of the sun," he said. "But it is certainly unlike any I have ever seen."

My grandfather now appeared in the doorway, wearing a vexed expression upon his face.

"Confound this business!" he exclaimed. "I have had to stop all the work on the place. Those foolish negroes down in the quarters are howling and praying like Bedlamites. They all declare it is Judgment Day, and will not listen to reason."

"What do you suppose is the cause of this darkness?" asked my grandmother, anxiously.

*From the 18th to the 21st of August, 1831, an unaccountable atmospheric phenomenon was observed throughout the State, and was known as the "Three Blue Days."

"I don't know. Of course, it is some natural cause."

"I am afraid we shall have to postpone our trip to the White Sulphur," she sighed.

"We had planned to go on the 21st, and I had engaged Miss Semiramis Dove to keep house for you and Penelope," she continued, turning to Mr. Mortimer. "I should not dream of leaving a guest, except that my widowed sister-in-law is at the Springs just now, and must return to her plantation in Middle Georgia in a very few days. I am sure Miss Semiramis will attend to everything concerning your comfort, else I should not leave you."

"Pray do not give me a thought in the matter, dear madam," replied my tutor. "I would not have you change your plans on my account for a very great deal. I am sure," he added with a laugh, "that I shall derive much profit from coming into closer domestic relations with a lady whose name is so curiously suggestive of heroic valour and gentle tenderness."

"A fool woman and a fool name!" ejaculated my grandfather. "But let's see: this is the 18th, isn't it?" And he consulted a pocket almanac. "Perhaps the trip may be arranged, after all."

"Surely, they will get over this excitement in three days!" remarked Mr. Mortimer. But in this conjecture he was wrong. The sinister effect of the "Three Blue Days" was destined to have a precipitating influence upon the strange and tragic events that immediately followed them.

"I think, Judith," suggested my grandfather, "it would be well for you to go down to the quarters and speak to the negroes. They have an abiding faith in your decrees."

My grandmother looked doubtful, but acquiesced, and to my surprise bade me come with her, and fetch some jellies and cordials which she wished to distribute among the old and decrepit slaves, who expected such attentions from her, and who

were wont to make dismal complaint at the slightest neglect on her part.

As we entered the quarters, we at once became aware that some unusual demonstration was in progress. There was an air of gloom and dread over the little settlement that was quite distinct and apart from the depressing influences of the close, heavy air and the sombre blue light that encompassed earth and sky. A profound silence reigned in the cabins. The chickens had gone to roost in the trees; and from the very topmost branches of the oaks and firs there came every now and then the shrill, discordant cry of some peacock, as if in protest against the long-drawn twilight. As we walked along, it seemed to me that the animals looked curious and abnormal, like the figures in a Chinese perspective.

"How queer everything is to-day!" I ventured with a nervous little laugh that jarred sharply on the dim stillness.

"Don't be silly, Penelope," said my

grandmother. But just then Gladys gave a long, whining howl, and I certainly saw her start violently. A moment later a solitary voice broke the silence,— a voice that rose high and clear, with piercing sweetness, and then suddenly dropped to a low, wailing, minor note of infinite sadness. We stopped at the window of the nearest cabin.

"That's Lame Jim singing to old Betsy," I remarked.

"Hush!" said my grandmother; and involuntarily we waited to listen:—

"De Mighty One's a-comin' ter break de chains uv sin:
We mus' be ready, ready, sho', ter let Lord Jesus in,
Ter let Lord Jesus in,
We mus' be ready, ready, sho', ter let Lord Jesus in.

"De stars dey 'pears ashamed ter shine, de sun done hide his face.
In dis gre't Judgment Day uv wrath what soul shall fin' Gord's grace?
What soul shall fin' Gord's grace?
In dis gre't Judgment Day uv wrath what soul— shall— fin'— Gord's— grace?"

The refrain rang out like a half-pleading half-accusing cry. Old Betsy's sightless eyes were turned upward, as if striving to pierce through the blackness to catch a glimpse of the coming glory.

"Ready? Ready, did you say? Who's ready?" she muttered. "Why, dem what has waited in pra'r an' patience, dem what has wearied in toil an' sweat. Get de Good Book an' put it in granny's han's, chile."

The crippled boy did as he was bid.

"Now fin' de verse dat was wrote fer all de po' ole niggers an' de blin' an' de lame like you an' me,— de verse dat say, 'Come unter me.' You kin tell it by de red yarn string at de place."

"Here it is, granny," said the boy.

"You done foun' it? Now, chile, put granny's finger on dem words, 'All you who am weary an' heavy-loaden, come unter me; an' I will give you res'.' Now, when de Lord step in at de do', I'll tell him how it's ole Betsy dat's weary and heavy-loaden,

an' wan' ter come unter Him. Now sing de las' verse 'bout de comin' uv de Lord."

Once more the boy lifted his voice and sang:—

"De Mighty One's a-comin' wid buckler an' wid sword,
De angel trumpets soundin' fer de comin' uv de Lord,
Fer de comin' uv de Lord,—
De angel trumpets soundin' fer de comin' uv de Lord!"

There was a note of expectancy in the boy's voice that thrilled us as we listened.

"Come on," whispered my grandmother. "We won't disturb them." And we passed on toward another cabin. Here there were sounds of weeping and moaning. My grandmother spoke to the inmates, kindly but firmly assuring them that there was no occasion for any alarm. Indeed, she tried to explain the phenomenon in simple words suited to their understanding; but it was useless. They listened respectfully, but her

words carried no weight. It was in vain, too, that I endeavoured to entice my friends Daphne, Celeste, and Cynthy from their hiding-places under the bed; though now and then a woolly head emerged far enough to see what was going on in the room. At an auspicious moment, just as Daphne's frightened face appeared from under the bed-spread, I pointed to some cookies I had brought. She shook her head violently, and whispered:—

"I cyan't, Mis' Pen. It ar' Jedgment Day!" and then drew in her head after the fashion of a terrified mud-turtle. A moment after another ball of wool darted forth, and a seductive voice murmured:—

"Give it ter me, Mith Pen. Eat'n' er cooky won't mek Jedgment Day come no thooner."

During this colloquy Celeste kept one eye on her mammy, while she adroitly stretched forth her hand for the proffered dainty. She was carrying out a system of Epicurean phi-

losophy she had tested before, and found satisfactory.

In every cabin we visited there was the same fixed and absolute conviction that the end of all things was near. We found Aunt Kizzie unearthing her "buryin'-close" from a mysterious box; while black Chloe wailed:—

"Law! 'Tain't no use, kase, ef it's Jedgment Day, won't nobody be lef' ter bury nobody!" But this argument had no effect upon Aunt Kizzie, who continued her preparations for death in rigid solemnity.

When the last jars of jelly and cordials were disposed of, we turned our steps toward the manor house.

All night and during the two days that followed, the negroes were to be seen collected together in little groups, to pray and exhort and sing. Work was not to be thought of, and my grandfather went about the house grumbling about the neglect of crops and the general demoralisation. It

was the same way on every plantation in the section. When the morning of the 21st dawned clear and bright, we all breathed more freely. But, in spite of the blue sky and the sunshine, the shadow of their recent terror still seemed to hang over the negroes. Mammy and Uncle Isham seemed particularly low in spirits, and I could not inveigle either of them into conversation. It was toward afternoon that I noticed these two talking together very earnestly. I was sitting under the lattice-work of a little, disused summer kitchen at the end of the left wing of the house. It was a quiet nook where I was entirely free from interruption when I wished to absorb myself in a fairy-tale; for the left wing of Winston Manor had not been occupied for nearly half a century. There were rumours of ghosts holding high carnivals here on moonlight nights, which were currently reported and believed by the slaves. So I was somewhat surprised to see Mammy and Uncle Isham in this par-

ticular spot. They did not see me; and I was wondering in an idle sort of way what would happen if I should give a faint ghostly groan or two, when a few disjointed words arrested my attention.

"It got ter be done; but who gwine ter do it?" I heard Mammy say in a strangely troubled voice.

"I is!" answered Uncle Isham, firmly.

"Ef Nat knowed"—

I pricked up my ears; but Mammy's anxious voice sank so low I could not distinguish what would happen "if Nat knew."

"We got ter be wise as de sarpint," warned Uncle Isham. "An' we ain't got no time ter lose."

"I kin do my part ef you kin do yourn," said Mammy.

"I'll"— And again I lost the last part of the sentence.

"I wonder what they're talking about," I said to myself; but, with the inconsequence

of childhood, the matter passed from my mind, as they disappeared around the angle of the house. In after years the meaning of this half-caught conversation was clear and plain to me.

Shortly before tea-time, as we were sitting in the long hall, Uncle Isham's grey head appeared at the door.

"'Scuse me, Marster an' Mistis, but er boy hev just come down f'om Mars Page Braxton's wid er message fer we-all f'om Mis' Kitty; an' she say how fer you-all ter come right up, kase Mars Page hev been took sudden wid his hade, an' 'pears like he won't hardly live till mornin'." Uncle Isham's voice trembled as he delivered the message. "An' I done tole de boy he better go 'long, fer I'd bring you de word," he explained.

"Poor Kitty! Of course, Christopher, we will go! Poor Kitty! Poor, dear child!" exclaimed my grandmother; while my grandfather ordered the carriage to be fetched at once.

"This is dreadful!" he said. "And Page such a specimen of manly strength! It's incredible!"

Mr. Mortimer offered to ride up, also, in case he could be of service. But my grandmother said, "No," emphatically. "Why, you're not fit to think of riding!" she declared. "You must obey your nurse." And so the matter was dropped.

"Come, Pen, you may go, if you like. Perhaps you can amuse the children, and keep them out of the way," said my grandfather. But I hung back.

"I think I ought to stay and look after Mr. Mortimer," I said.

"That is better," said my grandmother. "There's the carriage. Be a good girl. Your grandfather will ride over to-morrow, and let you hear about your cousin Braxton. Good-by!" And in the twinkling of an eye, it seemed to me, the carriage was rolling down the dusty highway on its twenty-five-mile drive to Jerusalem.

When Mammy came in later on, she gave a little scream as she saw me,—

"Fer Gord's sake, Penelope, what you doin' here?"

"Gracious, Mammy! You needn't look as if you had seen a ghost! I stayed at home to look after things," I added with some ostentation.

"You ain' goin' ter Mis' Kitty's?" she asked stupidly.

"Why, of course not," I answered. "They've gone."

"Fer Gord's sake!" she repeated again. And then, seeing my look of surprise, she added: "Co'se, honey, I thought you'd go 'long wid yo' grandma. Dat's all."

"Close the blinds, Pen, will you?" called Mr. Mortimer. "I think one of your slap-my-face storms is around the corner." As he spoke, a gust of wind came puffing down the chimney with such force that the screen fell with a great clatter.

"Lord help us!" ejaculated Mammy.

"I love storms!" I cried, running to the open window and leaning out. "There is just one big black cloud in the sky. And look! How strange! It is the figure of a man! See the old shoes on his feet and the handkerchief tied around his neck! Come quick, Mammy and Mr. Mortimer! Look, look! He's a black man! Can't you see his teeth?" I exclaimed, as a rift in the upper part of the cloud made the semblance of a row of white teeth in a black face perfectly distinct.

"It is the most definite cloud-shape I ever saw in my life," remarked Mr. Mortimer. "See how the wind drives him forward! He is marching toward Richmond!"

"Don' look no mo'! For Gord's sake, don' look no mo'!" exclaimed Mammy, her face ashy with superstitious terror. "It's de Debil's own wu'k!" And she shut the blinds with a resolute hand.

"Well," said Mr. Mortimer, "he seems

to have taken the storm along with him, you see. The wind has changed, and we won't catch the rain here; but the up-county streams will be past fording in a few hours."

Mammy set about to light the candles, but she was fidgety and nervous. After tea Mr. Mortimer read one of my favourite fairy-tales to me; and then we played cribbage until bedtime.

When I kneeled down at Mammy's knee to say my prayers that night, I made this addendum to my usual petition:—

"Lord, keep us all safe to-night, and please don't let the world come to an end until everybody gets good. Amen."

Then I got into bed and went to sleep, with no presage of danger to disturb my slumbers.

Chapter VIII.

IT must have been close upon midnight when I suddenly awakened with a sense of an unknown peril upon me. I listened. Yes, there was certainly a noise downstairs. I could hear voices in the hall. What had happened? What was the matter? Too much frightened to call out, I lay in an agony of fear. Suddenly, in the darkness, I felt Mammy's hand on my arm.

"Don' speak fer yo' life, chile!" she whispered rapidly. "Mammy'll save her baby, ef she dies fer it!"

I clasped her hand in terror. She was shaking like a leaf. "O my Gord! De niggers is riz! De niggers is riz!" she moaned.

"Strike and kill! In the name of the Lord and Nathaniel, we shall be free!" cried a loud voice, whose tones I recognised; then the crashing of the timbers, as the bedroom door below gave way beneath

the fierce blows showered upon it. A yell of rage and disappointment burst from the negroes, when they discovered that their intended victims had escaped.

"Quick, chile! Fer Gord's sake, quick!" cried Mammy, as she tore down the screen from before the wide fireplace. "Climb up! Dey done drunk wid blood now, an' mebbe de mark won't save you."

Partly with her assistance, and partly goaded on by the terror induced by my desperate situation, I managed to scramble up the sooty chimney, where my foothold among the projecting bricks was maintained by leaning my body against the opposite wall. The clamour grew louder every moment, as the negroes approached the apartment wherein I was concealed. In a flash I realised somehow that Mammy had imperilled her life by saving my grandparents. With a cunning born of desperation and with a courage that was the instinct of love, she went to the door and opened it.

"Nat," she called in a low voice, "dey all done gone; but I got de keys fer you, an' dere is enough silver to mek you rich fer yo' life."

"Gone? Gone?" exclaimed the insurgent. "And you tell me this, woman? Where have they gone? Answer, or this axe shall open your skull!"

"Fer Gord's sake, Nat, I couldn't hender 'em f'om goin', could I? You kin kill me ef you chose; but, ef you does, you'll never fin' de buried money, kase my mother was de las' Voodoo dat knowed de secret, an' she lef' it ter me."

Her words had an effect, for there was silence for a moment.

Then Nat Turner raised a stern voice in protest, but his words were at once drowned out by a storm and clamour of lustful cries. In a moment or two, sternly commanding silence, he regained a temporary ascendency over his howling mob of followers, but one which even I, sick with fear and effort

though I was, judging from the undertone of murmurs which reached me, recognised as hanging in an imminent balance until he spoke again. Then he said quietly, "Woman, lead the way!"

While this conversation was in progress, I scarcely dared to breathe, and would no doubt have escaped detection, had not an untimely thing befallen. Just as the door was opened for their exit, an unfledged swallow from the heights above tumbled down upon my head. Involuntarily, I started, lost my footing, and fell!

In an instant Mammy's protecting arms were around me. There was a chorus of exclamations, as one black follower of the prophet rushed toward me, calling out in guttural tones,—

"Voodoo Maman, gib us de goat widout horns!"

"De mark! De mark! Fer Gord's sake, remember de mark!" cried Mammy, as the flash of an axe-blade gleamed over me in the

bright moonlight. At the same moment a pair of short, muscular arms tore me from her frantic embrace. A heavy, distorted hand was laid upon my lips. Then there was a rush, a click, a flash, and I knew no more of what followed.

. . . . . .

It was late in the afternoon of the next day when I was aroused from what seemed to me to have been a long and terrible dream. A pale yellow light shone across the earthen floor of a sort of subterranean grotto or cavern.

I was lying upon a pallet of dried leaves that rustled as I moved my arm toward the dark stone wall near which I lay. I drew back my hand hastily. Great drops of icy ooze stood out upon its surface, damp and chill as the face of the dead. An odour of mould filled the cavernous vault with a subtle, grave-like aroma. I wondered if I were dead, if I had been killed and buried, coffinless, in this horrible place.

Toward the further end of the cave I could see something white outlined against the black background of shadow. As my eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, this white object gradually assumed the semblance of a human figure, with wide, outstretched arms.

The bar of light shifted and appeared to move; and the figure of a man emerged from some obscure angle, and went toward the white figure against the wall. He paused a moment, and then a voice spoke. This is what I heard:—

"O Son of God! say to the Father that I have done the work foreordained for me to do. Thou knowest, O Son of Man, that, when the Sign was given, I obeyed. See these red stains, O Holy One, and by them know that the innocent blood of the babe has been spilled for the cleansing of the great sin, even as thine own innocent blood was shed to wash men's souls! Thou knowest that hate did not harden the heart of

Nathaniel, thy prophet, nor did anger strengthen his arm to smite the rulers; but that he did perform that only which he was sent to do!

"The life of thy prophet is but a straw in the wind, but it shall show where the tempest shall break. It is a ransom for the fifty-and-five whose fates were sealed in the Great Book before all world,—a ransom for the shackles of the slave!"

The words were spoken in a perfectly natural voice, as though the speaker were face to face with some familiar companion. There was a slight pause after the last words. Then he spoke again.

"When the last day comes, ask the Good Father to put the words into my mouth as a testimony and a witness of the future. The blood of the white child cries aloud for my blood, and I give it freely. And I pray that, when the great battle comes, my people shall be patient and wait meekly for the gift that shall be theirs. For the great end

for which I was sent I have lived,—and I shall die!"

The great fear that had been upon me fell away from me as I listened. I sat upright and gazed with all my eyes at the kneeling figure, whose lips continued to move silently. Presently he rose up, and, taking a bit of bread from a stone ledge above his head, began to make a low, peculiar sort of noise with his lips. There was a scurry along the wall; and a great, gaunt rat ran toward him, and ate the bits of bread from his fingers. The negro stooped down and stroked the creature gently, all the while making that same singular noise. The rat was quite tame and perfectly fearless, leaping to the shoulder of its protector and nestling there for several moments in evident contentment. Presently Nat arose, and the rat jumped down and scampered to his hole.

A strange thought took hold of me.

"Uncle Nat," I called in a weak, queer voice. The dwarfish figure shuffled toward me, and sat down on the edge of the pallet.

"Well?" he said.

"Are you going to kill me?"

He shook his head.

"Why not?" I pointed to the stains on his shirt, and shuddered; though I was conscious that it was not from personal fear.

"Because you are marked with the Mark," he answered.

"Then it was you who saved me from that man's axe. Oh, I can see it now!" And I put my hand over my eyes. "Did anything happen to — to my grandparents?"

"A woman's treachery saved them!" he said fiercely.

"And Mr. Mortimer?"

"He was not of the Accursed!"

A wild hope now seized me.

"Let me go home, Uncle Nat! Take me home!" I cried. "I swear I will not tell them where you are!"

He gazed at me with a curious sort of intentness, but made no answer. I grew strangely bold.

"You are a cruel, wicked man to kill innocent people!" I cried. "Don't you know God says, 'Thou shalt not kill'?"

"I fulfilled the Law. They will kill me, and it will be man's law."

He uttered the words calmly and evenly, a smile playing over his face as he spoke. Nothing seemed to matter to this strange, terrible man. I had no fear, yet a mad desire to get away from him seemed to suffocate me. I raised myself up with a wild idea of flight in my mind, but fell back again upon my bed of leaves from sheer exhaustion. Nat Turner went to a receptacle I could not see, and brought back a bottle of some black mixture and a small wooden tray laden with stale biscuits, cheese, and smoked beef. He was evidently prepared for a siege.

"Eat," he said. And I took the food, and ate it ravenously.

"Now drink this." And he handed me a battered tin cup, into which he had poured

a draught of the potion. I put the cup to my lips, and tasted its contents dubiously. There was a pleasant flavour to the beverage, and I swallowed it at one gulp. It must have been a powerful tonic, for almost instantly I felt a wave of renewed vitality sweep through my veins and strengthen my pulses.

"I am better now. I am ready to go home."

Then for the first time, as I looked down, I realised that I was in my night-gown.

"Oh, what shall I do? What shall I do?" I wailed, as I dragged the rough blanket from my improvised bed, and drew it close about me.

"I could not help it," he said in a quaintly apologetic tone. "Your life was in the balance: the men were mad."

"It was you who made them like that!" I replied angrily.

"Yes," he answered slowly; "but the workman must have his tools."

I looked at him with a sort of fascinated horror. "Oh, it was horrible to raise our slaves against us!"

"Your slaves? They were *my* slaves, I say,— body and blood of them,— mine!"

"You are really and truly a Voodoo then?" I asked in an awe-stricken tone. He shook his head scornfully.

"I have never asked for the goat without horns."

I gave a shudder. "That's what the man said when he was going to kill me. What does it mean?"

But Nathaniel Turner did not answer.

"It is time for you to go back now, before the cold night comes. Fold the blanket tight around you."

I looked down at my bare feet; but I felt as if I should not mind walking over heated ploughshares, if only I might find home once more.

"I don't mind anything," I cried joyfully. "I don't think you mean to be bad.

And, anyway, you have saved my life; and grandfather will do something for you, and I will never tell where you are!"

"No: you will not tell — yet," he said slowly, fixing those strange eyes full upon my face. He began then to move his spotted hands slowly up and down before my face, and I seemed to be drifting away into limitless space.

"What do you see, white child?" he asked, recalling my scattered senses suddenly.

I glanced about me. The low, overhanging walls of stone were receding into the distance, like a vanishing dream. Long stretches of field lay about us. In the distance the outlines of the Great Dismal showed darkly against the horizon. There were trees of a different growth from any I had ever seen in the vicinity of Winston Manor.

I rubbed my eyes.

"You will follow the path," he said, "until you come to the juniper-tree."

Then it seemed to me that I went onward, traversing the narrow footpaths through the wide, starlit fields, impelled by some force quite outside of my mental or physical volition. I came to the juniper-tree at last, a familiar landmark on the boundary line of our plantation, and sat down mechanically, waiting for I knew not what. Again and again I tried to recall what had happened and where I had been, but the effort was futile. From the moment that I had crept into my little white bed on that eventful night, my mind was a blank. When I tried to fix my thoughts on that night, they grew dazed and hazy, and an undefinable fear seemed to possess me. Not until the beginning of the last act of the Southampton tragedy could I recall the strange scenes which I had witnessed. The singular psychical force that had held my memory absolutely in its control did not wholly relax its influence until it passed from its earthly tenement. I only knew that I was

barefooted, with only my night-gown and a rough blanket about me, and that I was sitting under the old juniper-tree that had always been the limit of my wanderings from the manor.

Suddenly I heard the clatter of horse-hoofs down the plantation road, and then, as the rider drew within view, an exclamation that was a cry of mingled surprise and joy.

"My God, Penelope! Is it you?" cried Mr. Mortimer, leaping from his horse. "We thought you dead! The country is being scoured for miles for you or your — And here you are within our gates! Thank God! Thank God!" His face was drawn and haggard, as though he had not slept for weeks. "How was it? How did you come here?" He was patting me and stroking my hair, as he poured out this somewhat incoherent volley of words.

I smiled back into his face somewhat vacantly. How heavenly it was to hear his voice, and to *know* that I was at home! I

laid my head back on his shoulder, but did not try to speak lest I should break the spell of blissful content.

He looked down at me anxiously, a sudden fear dawning in his eyes. "Can't you speak? Don't you know me, dear?"

"Oh, yes," I whispered, with a little laugh. "Of course I know you, only I am too tired and too happy to talk."

"But where have you been, child?" he questioned, as he placed me in the saddle before him.

"I don't know," I answered.

"Don't know?" he repeated in a troubled voice. "Try and tell me all about it."

I put my hands up to my head. "Oh, please, Mr. Mortimer, I can't help it. I tried to remember, but I couldn't."

"Never mind, you poor little girl," he said. And then it seemed but a few moments until I was tightly clasped in my grandfather's arms, with a crowd of white drawn faces all about me. I could feel the

hot tears on my face like rain, while broken ejaculations of joy and of thankfulness broke from my grandparents' lips. From the rear came the sound of Mammy's voice, repeating again and again: —

"De Lord is done retu'n his los' lamb! Bless his Holy Name!"

Chapter IX.

THE news of the negro insurrection spread widely and rapidly throughout the contiguous counties, and the excitement and consternation were boundless. By noon of the day following my return to Winston Manor the whole section was in an uproar, and the barricades which had been hastily contrived by the frightened white people were no longer in requisition.

Armed patrols from Richmond were guarding the plantations, and the abject terror of the negroes was pitiful. The slave-owners in Virginia and the South had been aroused to a sense of danger threatening them in their own households. On every plantation the hordes of blacks who tilled the cotton, corn, and tobacco fields, and who called the landed proprietor "master," outnumbered the whites a hundredfold. The Southampton insurrection had cast a shadow of dread over every Southern

home. Mothers and wives and children went to bed at night oppressed by the horrible fear that even their most trusted servants might, in the twinkling of an eye, become their assassins; for it was impossible to conjecture how far Nat Turner's influence had reached. Although the white men of Southampton had promptly put down the insurrection and the insurgents were in hiding, fifty-five persons had been massacred between two days. Winston Manor had been the first place attacked, on the fatal night of August 21. A pistol shot fired from Mr. Mortimer's window had frightened the insurgents into a hurried flight; for they supposed that they were discovered, and that an armed force was at the door. Mr. Mortimer, who had been aroused by the noise from the dining-room, where the silver was being ransacked, had fired through the window, as a means of scaring off any possible thieves. He had hastily run down stairs, grandfather's pistols in hand, to dis-

cover the house in confusion and Mammy prostrate over my abduction.

Heedless of the danger of the enterprise, he had mounted Cavalier, and gone in search of my grandparents, judging that the negroes would not attempt to attack the village until they had taken possession of their owners' isolated homes, and until their forces should be strong enough to make such a course practicable.

From Winston Manor, Turner and his followers had gone to the Travis mansion; and there the leader of the assassins had with his own hand killed, together with his wife and his children, the man who had given him his freedom.

The grey face of the day looked down upon a scene of butchery more ghastly in its horror because of the passionless, immutable purpose of the man who led the frenzied mob. Old ladies, young children in the county school-house, on the roadside, the farmer on his way to work,— all were victims, without distinction of age or sex.

And the dwarfish figure of Turner was always the first to attack, as he called out in loud tones: "The axe of the prophet is the sword of the Lord! Strike, and you shall be free! Jehovah hath promised!"

Carried away by the apparent success of their revolt and dominated by the will of the black prophet, the insurgents acted as though one man.

Turner, who had formulated a plan for a new government, knew that money would be a necessary factor. So in every house there was a search made for the jewels, silver, and whatever money could be found. After the murderers had been put to rout, they were tracked through the fields by the bracelets, rings, watches, and vessels of silver which they had thrown away in their flight toward the swamps.

As soon as the news of the atrocities had reached Jerusalem, squads of men were in pursuit; and the ultimate capture of the insurgents was only a matter of time.

All of the slaves were more or less under suspicion, and my grandfather showed a discrimination and cool judgment at this juncture that were most admirable. Calling all the negroes in from the quarters, he talked to them calmly and wisely, showing a tact that no previous exigency had ever brought to light.

He bade Mammy and Uncle Isham stand on either side of him while he spoke.

"I have called you here to say to you that I have the utmost confidence in your affection for me and mine," he said. "These two," pointing to Mammy and Uncle Isham, "imperilled their lives to save my family; and there are many among you who are equally faithful and true. It is in order to protect *you* that the place must be guarded. All of you who have fire-arms or weapons of any sort bring them to me. There will be a search made by the authorities, and the possession of them will be regarded as evidence against you. The

leaders of this movement will pay the penalty of their folly, but I shall do what I can to protect the innocent."

"Gord knows, Marster, we never knowed what Nat was a-goin' ter do!" came from all sides.

This was, no doubt, true; for only a few negroes on each plantation had shared the terrible secret. Nat Turner's plan had been to keep his force of real accomplices few in number and under his personal direction. He trusted that the desire for freedom would be a sufficiently strong incentive to bring the whole of the slave population into concerted action, when once the work of revolt was begun.

Although every effort was being made to discover the hiding-place of the man who conceived, planned, and almost accomplished the insurrection of the Southern slaves, as yet no trace of him had been found. To all questions put to me concerning my disappearance and return, I could

only give the same answer, "I don't know." My distress was so evident and so genuine at this that my grandparents forebore touching on the subject. I suppose, too, that they were alarmed at my somewhat singular mental condition. The shock to my nerves had been so great that my memory appeared to be paralyzed.

The days dragged by and grew into weeks; but the search for the leader of the negro insurgents was kept up with unremitted vigilance, though with no result save failure.

After the first frenzy of excitement was over, the lower and coarser element of the population was seized by a fever of suspicion that was fraught with danger to all those disposed to be reasonable and conservative. This element was made up for the most part of that class of whites who did not and had never owned slaves. I think my grandfather must have felt that Mr. Mortimer's position among us was not safe, for he always made a point of accompanying him when he rode or drove into Jerusalem.

It was Uncle Isham who came in one morning with an anxious face, and said:—

"Ef young Mars Mortimer was feelin' peart enough to go 'long back whar he come f'm, I reckin 'twould be er mighty sensible thing ter do."

My grandfather turned about sharply:—

"What's this, Isham? What do you mean?"

"I mean, sah, dat de po' whites is gabblin' might'ly 'bout how it was jes' his talkin' ter Nat an' dem what stir 'em up ter dat hell's wuk; an' dey *do* say as how it lay 'tween him an' Nat, an', ef dey don' ketch Nat fo' long, dey gwine settle things up wid our Mars Mortimer, sah."

"Is this really true, do you think, Isham?"

Uncle Isham half closed his wrinkled eyelids: "Befo' Gord, I'se a-feared it's so, marster; an' you better git 'im clean off somewhar 'fo' de storm busts."

"You are right, Isham, I shall speak to Mr. Mortimer. You were wise to come to

me at once. Curse the miscreants!" he muttered to himself. "Do they dare to threaten a guest beneath my roof? I'll teach them to meddle with gentlemen!"

Uncle Isham lingered at the door. "An' dey ain' no time ter lose, neider, marster."

"You are right again. Go tell Mr. Mortimer I wish to see him here in the library at once."

Uncle Isham performed his commission with alacrity, and a moment later Mr. Mortimer appeared. The excitement of the last few weeks had left a visible mark upon him.

"Mortimer, you must get ready to go with me to Richmond to-morrow."

Mr. Mortimer looked surprised, but acquiesced.

"I will try to be ready," he said. "I should have liked to get a few more specimens"—

"Oh, damn your specimens!" said my grandfather, testily. He was not inclined to science. "I had hoped to have you stay

with us until you were strong and well again; but the truth is, Mortimer, these idiotic white paupers around here have got it into their heads that it was you who stirred up the negroes. On the whole, I think it's best to get you out of the way before they attempt anything disagreeable."

Mr. Mortimer turned very white.

"Do they think I instigated those hideous crimes? Well, let them think! I will stand my ground. I will not run away, like a criminal!"

"But you don't know the ruffians. For the first time in my life I ask a guest to leave my house."

"Of course, I understand that my presence here must be disagreeable and inconvenient under the circumstances. I shall be more considerate than to remain. If you will let one of the men take my boxes over to the inn at Jerusalem, I shall be greatly obliged. I shall certainly not steal away like a fugitive from justice."

"You totally misunderstand me!" exclaimed my grandfather. "If you stay in Southampton County like a fool, you stay in my house, I say!" He began to walk up and down the room rapidly as he was wont to do when under great excitement. "I don't know how this wretched business is going to end, but we'll stand together. I'll show these mongrels what they will get if they dare to insult by word or look an inmate of my house. Keep your pistols loaded, Mortimer; and I will carry mine. We'll teach them how to behave to gentlemen! It'll be rare sport, eh, Mortimer? Rare sport, I say!" My grandfather's blood was rising.

Mr. Mortimer laughed. "I never carried a pistol in my life," said he. "I think you'll find there's no occasion for such warlike preparation. The whole thing has been exaggerated, no doubt."

"Well, maybe so," remarked my grandfather, dubiously; "but Isham is discreet, and, to tell the truth, since the darkies have

risen against us,—and, if it hadn't been for that storm, they might partially have succeeded, too,—why, I admit I believe anything is likely to occur."

"I never knew you to be nervous before," said my tutor; "but we have had enough to shake nerves of steel lately."

"There is no more danger from them," said the master of Winston Manor.

The two gentlemen were still talking in low, earnest tones, when I noticed two men on the avenue riding up toward the house.

"Sheriff Lawson, as I live!" exclaimed my grandfather. He went out into the great hall, and opened the door. "Good day, Mr. Lawson," he said cheerily. "How fares it with you to day?"

"Bad enough, squire," answered the man. "Fact is, squire, I come down to see you very partic'lar."

"What can I do for you? But get off and come into the house where you can speak freely, you and your friend."

"Much obliged," was the reply; "but we'd rather not be showed off more'n can be helped, this here business bein' kind er private, so to speak."

"That's all right," said my grandfather; and he ushered the two men into the little smoking-room back of the library. Mr. Mortimer and I could distinctly hear every word of the conversation that followed, and I could see through the partly open door.

"Well, what's the trouble?" asked my grandfather.

The sheriff crossed his legs nervously. "It's just this, squire. They're after the young feller from the No'th that's been stoppin' with you fer a spell."

"Well?" said my grandfather, interrogatively.

Mr. Lawson cleared his throat in an embarrassed manner. "Well, squire, I've allers found you a good frien' to me an' mine. So me an' Joe come down to make a little proposition. You see this ain't no

kind er business to fool with. The Piney Cove gang and the Ginseng gang have done swore to swing Nat Turner or the young feller. It 'pears like they don' care so much which one it be, so it's *one*. They have done set ter-morrer night as the limit."

My grandfather's face grew rigid. "Is there no trace of Turner yet?" he inquired.

"Nary track nor scent, sir There's two parties searching the swamps now, but I doubt if it'll do any good."

"Well, what do you propose to do?" There was an unmistakable note of defiance in the voice of the questioner.

"Th' ain't but one way: I've got to arrest 'im."

"Arrest an innocent gentleman in my house? Never! I shall defend him to the utmost if necessary!"

Sheriff Lawson looked around cautiously. "For your sake *an'* his, squire, we've come down here to get that feller behind the jail walls afore the mob's out. There's a party

of two hundred goin' ter rampage ter-morrer night. Ef they find out he's already been arrested, it may simmer 'em down. Ef it don't, why we an' you together can put a gyuard aroun' the ol' Jerusalem jail that'll bring 'em to reason. Ain't that so, Joe?"

The other man raised his eyes from the flowers in the carpet for the first time, and answered briefly, "That there's a true bill!"

"An' now you know the case, sir, we'd better be movin', hadn't we, Joe?"

"Fer a fac'," replied Joe.

My grandfather grasped Mr. Lawson's hand. "It shall be as you say." Then he called Mr. Mortimer.

"I am ready," answered my tutor, stepping into the room. "I thank you," he said, turning to the two men, "for what you have done for me. You are perfectly right: it is the only possible chance I shall have." He held out his hand to my grandfather, but the latter said in a matter-of-fact way,—

"I have got business in Jerusalem. I am going along with you."

For a moment my tutor's face was illumined with a rare, dazzling light. I rushed into the room, and clung desperately to his arm, weeping and sobbing. He unclasped my hands gently.

"Don't cry, dear. I know that I shall be back here soon."

"I promise you that, Penelope," said my grandfather, stoutly. But that did not reassure me.

After a few minutes' conversation with my grandmother, who dissembled her fear at being left alone for even a short period, and a few words of admonition to the patrollers, guards, and slaves, the little party left us to entertain the invisible guests of terror and suspense.

All the afternoon I was feverish and miserable, my head felt oddly dull and numb. Oh, if only I could remember something! What was it? Something I promised some-

body to do or not to do. I began vaguely to realise that in some way my silence might be a factor in the working of evil toward Mr. Mortimer, when I heard my grandmother murmur to herself, her eyes fixed strangely on my face, "If only the child could tell!"

Tell what? That was the question.

Chapter X.

I DO not believe that any one at the manor slept much that night. When I rose up next morning and looked out from my dormer window, the bright sunshine seemed to mock the interior gloom of my heart. The twitter of the birds chirping their morning salutation, and the low hum of newly awakened insect life that is so distinct in the early day in the country, irritated me. The croaking of the frogs in the morass seemed ominous. Every nerve in my body was strained and tense. All night Mr. Mortimer's pale face had haunted my dreams, and I was physically as well as mentally worn out.

What would they do to him? What right had they to do anything to him? Surely, my grandfather would not allow any one to injure him. The governor was his close friend, and it was not far to Richmond. But suppose the governor was not at home:

what then? Suppose they did not find Nat Turner. These and a thousand other torturing thoughts passed and repassed through my restless brain. Neither my grandmother nor I made more than a pretence of eating breakfast that morning, though her strong faith in my grandfather's influence throughout the county gave her grounds for hoping that our friend would soon be relieved from the danger of his position.

I remember how we both tried to talk about indifferent matters, as people always do when a momentous or absorbing interest oppresses them; how we made excuses to go to the door or window every little while to see if any one were coming down the road, which was visible for a short distance from the front of the house. This inarticulate anxiety that expresses itself in a thousand trifling actions is far harder to bear than that which one dares to voice. All day I had felt a strange sensation in my head, as though I were groping about for something

in the dark. This feeling grew stronger as the long hours went by. I kept putting my hands to my head and kept rubbing my eyes as if to gain a clearer vision. My grandmother observed the frequently repeated gesture.

"Why do you do that, Penelope?" she asked.

"I don't exactly know," I answered vaguely. "I feel as if I were trying to see something,— I don't know what."

The clock on the stair landing sounded the stroke of two just as I spoke, and I gave a startled cry; for I felt a great wave of recollection stir the pulses of my brain. I saw the moonlit room, the flash of steel, the horrible faces around me, and Mammy's passionate anguish,— all of the dreadful scene that had temporarily been erased from my memory. There was a blank moment; and then, as I sat with my face buried in my hands, another picture took form and color before my mental vision. I saw the long,

low, cavernous vault, with something white showing at the farther end. One by one every detail of my singular experience appeared to me, like a set of views unrolled upon a magic screen. I saw the cavity that was the entrance to this curious place, and the rough ladder that led down to it through the body of a hollow tree, a giant oak, the rotten interior of which had been hollowed out by a cunning hand until it was sufficiently large to form a means of ingress or egress to and from the hiding-place below. Close to this tree ran a foot-path through the tobacco fields straight toward our boundary line marked by the old juniper. I seemed to see myself climbing up the ladder to the carefully concealed opening in the trunk of the tree. From this odd tower I was gently let down and gently set upon the winding path, which I followed instinctively.

Everything was clear to me now. The words of the sheriff came back to me: "If they don't catch Nat, squire, they're goin'

ter settle things up with the young feller." I started up wildly. How could any one ever find that place that was so near and yet so far away! Mr. Mortimer's life was in danger if Nat Turner was not discovered, and I knew where he was!

"Quick!" I cried. "I remember now, — I must go, — I must tell them. I must see grandfather!"

My grandmother laid a detaining hand on my shoulder.

"What ails you, child? Try to calm yourself, Penelope. What are you talking about? What is it you remember?"

"I can't stop to tell *you*," I replied. "I must tell them where he is. I know! I know now. Oh, let me go quick before it's too late to save Mr. Mortimer."

I do not think that my grandmother had any thought but that I had gone quite daft.

I believe that she decided instantly that the easiest and perhaps the only way to pacify me was to accede to my demands.

She ordered the carriage to be fetched at once.

"Come now, child, you shall go to your grandfather," she said soothingly, "only do try to be more calm. I shall myself take you to him at once."

Then she bade Mammy bring out wine and biscuits, which she insisted should be consumed before I set out upon the long drive to Jerusalem. The poor old lady was very much upset by what she considered this latest calamity. She told Mammy to get in the carriage, and made Uncle Isham ride on the box with Ephraim. The possibility of having a child-maniac to look after was one which appeared to collapse her usual strength and firmness; and she followed Mammy's every suggestion meekly, having none to offer herself.

"You jes' put yo' hade right here on Mammy's lap," said my old nurse, as she rolled up an impromptu pillow; "kase Mammy's lamb got er bad misery in de

hade, sho'. See, dar, ain't dat nice and sof'? Den, when we gits ter Jerus'lem, you'll jes' feel smart an' peart agin. Dar now, shet yo' eyes an' go ter sleep now. Dat's jes' what ails you."

I obeyed the first part of this injunction, but the latter was out of the question. We had made several miles of our journey when a new aspect of the situation presented it self to my troubled mind. I was going over and over all of the dreadful possibilities that might be ahead, when suddenly I remem bered my promise to the man who had saved my life. "I swear I will not tell them where you are." The words danced in fiery letters before me, and yet that was just what I was on my way to do. I sprang up and burst into a fit of sobbing that seemed to rend me in twain. I felt as though my heart would burst with the strain. I would have to tell my whole story and break my oath to my rescuer, or be silent and let Mr. Mortimer suffer — I did not know what —

death, perhaps. My grandmother and Mammy tried to comfort me, but it was useless. I could not tell them my grief and terror. I felt as if my worst fears might take the bodily form of reality if I voiced them, and was silent, except for the long, dry sobs that shook me at intervals.

We had driven with more than usual speed, and had almost entered the outskirts of the village, somewhat earlier than we had expected to do. As we reached the cross-roads, we observed a small cavalcade of horsemen approaching from the direction of the swamp. Uncle Isham leaned forward, and put an anxious face in at the carriage window.

"It 'pears ter be some strange doin's over yander," he said. "Mus' we drive on, Mist'is, or mus' we tu'n back?"

My grandmother watched the little procession for a moment, and then glanced at me.

"Drive on," she said, "and stop at the village inn. I must see your master. Try to get ahead of those people."

Ephraim gave the horses a flick with his whip, and the lumbering vehicle rolled on apace. For a few moments we had the road to ourselves, but the way was soon blocked again.

"It's er funeril percession, Mist'is. Fer de Lord's sake, don't let Ephrum pass it, or we'll have bad luck, sho'. Dat sign don't never fail."

Mammy's voice was excited. My grandmother knew in what special dread the negroes held this superstition, so she motioned to Ephraim to stop. He did so, drawing the carriage to one side in order to give free passage to our fellow-travellers.

As the horsemen drew nearer, we perceived that Mammy was mistaken. In the middle of the group was an ox-cart, in which sat a solitary figure. The mounted men, who seemed to be a guard over the occupant of the cart, were silent. I wondered if this was because they had recognised our carriage. For an instant the strain upon me was re-

laxed: a curiosity to know what this cortège meant acted as a tonic to my nerves.

"What are they doing?" I asked, as I leaned out to see more clearly.

The movement brought me face to face with the Black Prophet!

"It's Nat!" said Mammy, in a half whisper. "Now Gord be merciful! Dey done cotched him at las'!"

I gazed at the familiar face, fascinated by its solemn intensity. My grandmother turned very pale, but summoned courage enough to motion to one of the horsemen to come to her side, in order that she might inquire if this were true.

"True as the gospel, ma'am," was the reply, spoken in a low voice. "He done like he thought hisself a general, ma'am,— he did. Laid down his ole ramshackle gun as if he was surrenderin' to another general. If Ike hadn't tu'ned state's evidence, we wouldn't er got 'im, thet's my opinion. He's a brave man, anyhow."

"When did you — make this discovery?" inquired my grandmother.

"'Twas just two o'clock to the dot," answered the man. "I looked at my watch just as Joe put the rope on his arms. He just said, 'The hour is come,' and held out his hands. He knew it was all over, I reckon."

Had Nathaniel Turner removed his influence from me at the very moment he had given up all hope of escape? My child-mind did not formulate this question then, but in after years it propounded itself to me with strong insistence.

Just then the man in the cart recognised me. I felt his luminous gaze fixed on my face.

"Your lips are unsealed, white child," he said distinctly. "It will not matter now."

"You keep yo' mouth shet, nigger," called out one of the men roughly. The captive did not appear to hear the rebuke.

"Is there no way for us or for you to get

into Jerusalem but by this road?" asked my grandmother, who, besides being greatly distressed by what we were seeing, was now growing very much alarmed, not knowing what might happen when the news of the capture should become circulated. The man shook his head.

"But your nigger can drive ahead, an' we'll try to keep behind and let you get there before we-all."

"Thank you. Drive on, Ephraim. Don't spare the horses," she ordered. But the road was muddy from the recent rain, and we found it impossible for our heavy family coach to keep ahead. Thus we found ourselves in the unpleasant position of vanguard to the procession.

One great burden had been lifted from me by that briefly spoken sentence: "Your lips are unsealed." I would not be obliged to break my word now, and I felt guilty at the song my heart sang,—"Mr. Mortimer is saved! Mr. Mortimer is saved!"

Sheriff Lawson had been notified by a messenger of what had happened, and had a strong guard ready to protect the prisoner, should violence be attempted. As the little cortège approached the village, and passed through the long narrow street, at one end of which the jail was located, a mob collected to view the captured negro. Perhaps the fact that the Winston carriage was in the street had something to do with quelling the angry outburst from the crowd; but I think, too, that there was something in the aspect of the prisoner that forbade ribald jest or vulgar manifestation. Sitting there half-starved, uncouth in his rags, he was composed, calm, almost indifferent. Over his tattered clothing he wore the garment of dignity. Helpless and patient as the ox that was bearing him on toward the scaffold, he sat there; but there was no fear in his solemn face, and his courage commanded respect.

The inn was some little distance beyond,

and the increasing crowd made it almost impossible for our coach to proceed. My grandmother and Mammy were sitting as far back as possible, in order to escape observation. The central figure of the gloomy caravan was so close to us that we could hear what was said very distinctly. The man who rode next to the prisoner watched him curiously.

"Well, Nat," he remarked, "it was one of your own men who tole us whar to find you. There's not a nigger in Southampton who'll stand by you now."

Turner did not answer for a little space. He was looking into the distance. "One of the twelve was a traitor," he said calmly. "I knew one of them would betray me."

As I heard the words, a lump rose in my throat. And I had been going to betray him!

"For Heaven's sake, get out of this," said my grandmother, desperately. "I cannot endure it."

"Gentlemen, will you not let this lady's carriage turn to the left?" cried the voice of my grandfather, with a ring of command in it. And then, as if by magic, a way was opened; and we turned down a little lane and drew rein before the sign of the Blue Dragon. Grandfather was at the carriage door to meet us, pale, dishevelled, weary.

"What on earth brought you here?" he inquired in utter amazement at this unexpected meeting.

"I will explain," gasped my grandmother, in a broken voice. "O Christopher, thank God you are here, and thank God Mr. Mortimer is safe now."

"Let us hope so," returned my grandfather, briefly; and then we were ushered into the little parlour of the Blue Dragon, exhausted and overcome with the strain of excitement, but with a new hope in our hearts.

Chapter XI.

ALTHOUGH we had often stopped at the village inn for a noonday meal during our excursions into Jerusalem, I had no acquaintance with the interior habiliments of the Blue Dragon; and the unfamiliar objects in the room about me filled me with a sensation of lost identity, when I opened my eyes next morning. I dressed myself quickly, and was ready before Mammy tapped at my door to announce breakfast. My grandparents were at table when I entered the little parlour, which served as a private breakfast-room on this occasion. I think my grandfather read in my eyes the question I dared not ask.

"Mr. Mortimer is all right, Penelope,—that is, as far as he can be in that wretched place. So come, eat your breakfast."

He drew my chair close to his own, and broke an egg for me.

"I am afraid that you and your grand-

mother had a bad time of it at the manor yesterday."

"We did, sir,— very bad."

"Your grandmother says you can tell us now what happened to you the night of the insurrection. Do you still remember about it?" He spoke very gently.

"Everything," I answered. "It all came back yesterday, just when the clock struck two." I tried to speak as calmly as I could, but my voice trembled.

"Hmh!" said my grandfather: "that was the exact time Turner was taken."

"Isn't it strange?" commented my grandmother, in a hushed voice.

"Then I began to remember it all in pictures," I continued; and I told the whole story as clearly and concisely as I could.

"Hmh!" repeated my grandfather. "It's beyond me,— the whole thing. Could you tell this to any one but me? To strangers, I mean, without getting frightened?"

"I *could;* but, O grandfather, I swore not to tell, and, unless it's to save Mr. Mortimer, I don't want to break my word. I know Uncle Nat killed people, women and babies; but I think he thought he was born to do it, and he couldn't help doing it. And, anyway, he saved my life; and, unless it's to save Mr. Mortimer, I won't,— I *can't!*"

My hands were cold as I twisted them together in an anguish of conflicting emotions.

"The child is right, Christopher," said my grandmother.

"I think it will be unnecessary for her to do more than to corroborate Mortimer's statement concerning that scene they witnessed in the swamp. Except at that time he never saw the negro; and, as Nat never saw him at all, his statement to that effect, together with my own testimony, will, I think, clear Mortimer from all suspicion as to complicity in the matter. The governor

has ordered an immediate trial. I shall do what I can to get the sentence commuted on the ground of insanity, but I fear there is no hope of success. I think it will be considered necessary to make an example for the future.

"Now, Penelope, are you brave enough to answer the questions they will ask you there?"

"I'd do a hundred times as much for Mr. Mortimer," I cried.

"You like Mr. Mortimer very much, eh?" My grandfather appeared to be pondering upon something quite intently. "Well enough to be willing to be under his care, when your grandmother and I are taken from you?"

"Oh, don't talk about being taken away from me; but I think, sir, if it was to happen, that I'd like to live with Mr. Mortimer always, and I would go to the end of the world with him."

My grandparents both laughed.

"What! Would you turn into a Yankee?"

"I would always be a Virginian as I was born, sir; but I think the Yankees are right about the slaves. I'm an Abolitionist myself."

"If that's so, I'll give you to Mortimer as soon as he gets out of Jerusalem jail!" said my grandfather. "We don't want any Abolitionists in Southampton County."

"I mean, sir, that I think owning human beings is wicked."

"Little girls don't know what they think! They have no business to think at all on such subjects," remarked the old gentleman, with a touch of testiness. "But you are a brave girl, Penelope; and, if you are summoned as a witness, I shall not be afraid for you." And he patted my head.

"I do trust, Christopher, that it may not be necessary," said my grandmother. "Will we have to stay here while this wretched trial is going on?"

"Nat's trial will be a short affair. Mortimer's may come after, so I am afraid we shall."

"It's so shockingly vulgar and conspicuous, the whole thing," moaned my grandmother, her aristocratic instincts in bitter revolt at the situation.

"So also are imprisonment and hanging," he remarked drily. "Basil Mortimer is as brave a gentleman as ever breathed, and a member of my family to boot; and I shall stand by him to the end."

"But I thought that all that was settled now that that creature has been taken into custody."

"So I hope, but there is still a strong prejudice against him. If Nat testifies that he had no knowledge of him, it will be in his favor, and"—

"Uncle Nat will not tell a lie," I interrupted.

"That's a singular truth," said my grandfather, reflectively. "He murders and insti-

gates to murder, but he won't lie. Sometimes I almost believe that he is absolutely deluded into believing himself a thoroughly good man. You know his foolish old mother says a blue light shone over his cradle the day he was born, and she has religiously taught the fellow from his childhood that God created him for some great mission."

"And this young Northerner has deluded you into the same opinion, it appears," said my grandmother, her delicate nostrils quivering contemptuously. "Bah! How I loathe such sickly sentimentality! After all, sane or insane, the negro is a desperate and dangerous criminal, and should be punished to the extent of the law."

My grandfather rose up from the table.

"It's a pity the Braxtons have gone to Richmond."

"I wish we were there, and out of this," was the reply.

"Well, we can arrange to go there just as

soon as Mortimer is released. It will be a good change for Pen and for all of us. I shall write to the overseer to-day."

"Well, then, you may tell him to tell Rebecca [Rebecca was my grandmother's maid] to pack my best gowns and bonnets and Penelope's clothing in the horsehair trunk, and see that it is sent here at once."

The prospect of a trip to Richmond cheered my grandmother's spirits.

As my grandfather had predicted, the trial of Nathaniel Turner was indeed a short affair. His counsel knew from the beginning that the fate of his client was inexorably fixed, and the negro's voluntary confession made any defence vain and futile. The day set for the trial, the 5th of November, found the village of Jerusalem filled to overflowing with people from all Southampton and the adjacent counties; and grave fears were entertained for the safety of both the prisoners lodged in the jail. A powerful guard had been placed about its walls; and,

though there were rumours and vague threats abroad, no violent demonstrations were made.

My grandfather had volunteered to testify in the case, and he made a strong appeal for clemency toward the prisoner on the ground of insanity. Mr. Mortimer took the same position, and made a fearless and passionate defence of his fellow-prisoner. The sea of faces in the crowded court-room grew dark and lowering as my tutor, himself accused, stood before them, and urged that mercy rather than justice be accorded. I was present, having been summoned as a witness; and, child though I was, I realised that Mr. Mortimer was endangering his own position and arousing more hostile feeling against himself by what he was saying. Yet a thrill of pride and exultation filled my heart when I heard his fearless words. How handsome and brave he looked, standing there an avowed champion for the doomed man!

When the black prisoner was called upon to state whether he had ever at any time held any communication with the Northerner, there was a breathless hush of expectancy in the audience. Nathaniel Turner rose up, and said in a loud voice, facing Mr. Mortimer,—

"Until this day I never saw this man!"

A half-suppressed murmur of disappointment rippled through the assembly, but was silenced as Mr. Mortimer then proceeded to relate our singular experience when lost in the swamps.

I, too, was called upon to tell what I knew; and I was dimly conscious that my story had a momentary influence in Nat's favor.

Again a murmur was audible; but it was a murmur of wonder and of pity, followed by a profound silence as I continued. You could have heard a pin fall, so breathless and intent were the people to catch my every word. The eyes of the negro never

left my face while I was on the witness stand; and I think that he, too, was conscious that my testimony weighed in his favor. Yet, as my grandfather hurried me out of the court-room after it was over, I knew instinctively what the end would be.

Before the early November twilight had closed in upon the day, the jury brought in a verdict of guilty. The date for the execution was set for the 11th.

Although, as one result of Nat Turner's trial, the hostile feeling against my tutor was greatly mitigated, yet it appeared that the county authorities did not deem it expedient to order Mr. Mortimer's release until the eve of the execution. Public attention, they argued, would then be so centred on the imminent tragedy that his departure with us would hardly be remarked.

I do not know how we could have borne the sick, weary days that followed, had we not been upheld by the hope of my tutor's speedy release. But on the afternoon of the

10th another disappointment awaited us. All our preparations for leaving had been made, when my grandfather came in, and announced to us that it would be impossible for us to get out of Jerusalem until the following morning.

My grandmother clasped her hands in consternation. "It's a question of Penelope's life now to get her away," she said.

"Oh, take me away,— take me away before *It* happens!" I begged imploringly.

"I will! I will!" said my grandfather. "Lawson said it was best for Mortimer to stay at the jail to-night. To-morrow morning we are to drive there, get him, and be off to Richmond. It's the only way, Lawson says."

"I will see him to-morrow, I will see him to-morrow," I whispered to myself. "To-morrow? O day of wrath and darkness! God be merciful to us all to-morrow!" I prayed.

Chapter XII.

ON the morning of the fatal day there was only one cloud in the sky, but it stretched a grey pall over the world from pole to pole. Downstairs there was a sound of stir and bustle. From the street there came a rumbling of a ceaseless stream of carts and waggons and the clatter of many horses. I shuddered as I heard these sounds.

No one spoke more than a brief greeting when I appeared; and our breakfast, eaten by candle-light, was despatched in silence. The flicker of the tallow candles cast a wavering light over the table-cloth, and lent additional pallor to our faces.

"Come," said my grandfather, "we must be off." And, after a short fifteen minutes of final preparation, he unceremoniously hurried us into the carriage.

When we drew up at the rear entrance of the jail, Mr. Lawson was there to meet us.

"I don' know what you'll say to it, squire," he said in a half-frightened, half-apologetic tone; "but *he* wants to see the little lady. I don' hardly know what ter do, sir; but, seein' 'twas his only and las' reques', I make bold ter tell you."

My grandmother uttered an hysterical "Impossible!" as she drew me closer to her side. I felt as though my heart would burst from my body. My grandfather paused irresolutely.

"I — Penelope"—

A vision of my tutor rose before me, and I seemed to know what he would wish me to do.

"I will — go. He saved my life," I said.

"O Christopher, don't allow it!" protested my grandmother.

"Hush!" was the stern reply. "Come, Penelope."

Never shall I forget what I felt as we entered the house of bondage. Mr. Mortimer

was waiting in the little hallway to receive us. I ran to him, and flung my arms about him. I could not trust myself to speak for a little while.

"He wants to see me," I whispered at last.

"And you?" he asked, looking down into my face.

"I will go," I said; "but you must go, too, and grandfather."

Mr. Mortimer must have understood that I was influenced by what I believed to be his desire. He clasped me closer to him.

"You are right, Penelope," he said.

"If it must be done, let us get it over with," broke in my grandfather, nervously. "The crowd increases every moment." And he motioned to Mr. Lawson.

The warden bade us follow him. We turned down a long passage to the left, and paused before a door while he placed the key in the rusty lock of the condemned man's cell. The negro lay on a straw pallet

in the corner. The deep regular breathing from his muscular chest betokened a dreamless sleep. The warden paused.

"I don't like to wake the nigger," he said. "Yet it ain't right not ter give him a chance ter prepare for"— He did not finish the sentence. "Get up, Nat," he said, laying his hand on the negro's shoulder. "Here's the little lady you said you wanted ter come."

Nat Turner turned his head slowly, opened his bloodshot eyes, and gazed earnestly from one to another of his visitors. Raising himself up on one elbow, he drew with his other hand a roll of paper from under the straw.

"I want the white child to keep this," he said, holding it toward me. "Let my testimony be handed down to the people of her race and of mine, that, when the end is accomplished, all may know it was truly foretold by me, Nathaniel, the prophet of the Lord."

The warden shook his head half deri-

sively, half pityingly, as he placed the dirty paper within my trembling fingers.

"That game's up, you know, now, Nat," he said. "'Tain't no use ter go ter th' scaffold lying."

Mr. Mortimer looked steadily into the negro's face.

"I believe you think what you say is true," he said slowly, a strange conviction dawning upon his mind.

Nat Turner turned his burning eyes full upon the speaker, with a look of ineffable joy. "May God's blessing be upon you for that, Mr. Mortimer!" he said.

"But you must not think that I do not deplore your mistake," said my tutor; "for it has been all a dreadful mistake. Don't you see now that you were wrong, that what you thought was your mission was a failure?"

"Was Jesus' effort a failure? They killed him, too."

My grandfather and Mr. Mortimer glanced

uneasily at each other. How strange it was to stand there and hear this negro murderer compare himself to Christ!

"The work of Christ lived on and was accomplished after him," said Mr. Mortimer.

Nat Turner rose up to his full height.

"And mine is but begun, I say to you. What was begun in blood shall be accomplished by blood!"

My grandfather was greatly impressed. "You have only made it harder for your race by what you have done," he said, "and now"—

"And now — I die," said the condemned man, in a low, rapturous voice. "Willing, — ready, — rejoicing. For I have seen"—

The tumult in the street grew louder as the mob increased about the jail.

"If God wills," he continued, "it shall be revealed to his prophet when the time of the redemption shall be."

He lifted his eyes as he spoke, and seemed

to gaze into some far-off yet distinct plane of vision. We watched the rigid features and fixed pupils with a singular sensation of awe.

"What does he see?" I asked my tutor, in a whisper.

"God knows," was the reply: "this is a strange world we live in."

Again a roar from the street warned us that it was full time for us to go.

"May the mercy of the Lord be with you!" said Mr. Mortimer, reverently, as we turned to leave the cell. For a moment we each of us, as by a common impulse, bent in an involuntary prayer. The motionless figure did not seem aware of our presence, and we withdrew in silence. Half-dazed, I followed my grandfather and Mr. Mortimer to the door, and was lifted into the carriage. Some one gave a sharp order to Uncle Isham, and we were at last on our way.

The streets were so crowded with people

that we were compelled to drive through by-ways for some distance in order to reach the high road. My grandparents tried to divert me as much as was possible, as I was now almost completely unnerved.

"Did Penelope tell you that we are going to make her over to you, Mortimer?" joked my grandfather.

"Would you like to have me?" I asked suddenly, slipping my hand into that of my tutor.

"Always?" he asked.

"Yes, for ever and ever after I am grown up."

His fingers closed tightly over mine.

"Yes, Penelope, if you do not change your mind."

At this moment the carriage turned a corner. As far as eye could reach, the crowd seethed and ebbed around us. Every available bit of space was filled with people, house-tops, fences, lamp-posts, everything. It became almost impossible to move along. My grandfather looked at his watch.

"We are late," he said, and then ordered Uncle Isham to try to get ahead.

But the crowd pressed forward with a renewed impulse, and, in their eagerness to see, climbed up on the carriage wheels, up on the shafts, yes, even on top of the carriage; and nothing could hinder them.

"Hush!" said one. "There he comes." The crowd swayed forward irresistibly; and, caught in the movement, even the heavy coach was turned and twisted together with its two sturdy horses, so that it faced leftward almost at right angles to its former position.

We were directly opposite to the scaffold, which hitherto had been out of our range of vision. Fascinated with the horror of the sight, I gazed fixedly at the instrument of death, as motionless as a statue. There was a stir at its base; and in an instant Nat Turner, followed by Mr. Lawson, quickly mounted the few steps to the platform, and with a commanding gesture faced the multitude.

"Masters, may I speak?"

"Gag him!" called a brutal voice from the crowd; but the sheriff called for silence. The shouts and jeers died into a hush, and the loud, clear voice continued:—

"What is done this day will not alter what will come to pass. That which I was sent to do I have done, but the end is not yet. Three times ten years shall come to pass before the deliverance shall be. In a vision of the future the Lord hath shown to me, Nathaniel, his prophet, a freed nation and a river of blood! White men, there shall arise one of your race in a far land, and blood shall be shed and the bonds shall be broken. I have done my work. What the Lord begins he shall surely finish. I see battles, fire, blood,—freedom!"

A shudder ran through the crowd as he spoke. Involuntarily, I raised my head from Mr. Mortimer's shoulder, and glanced up. The curious wooden structure stood outlined against the cloudy sky; and, as I looked, a

dark object swung in mid-air from the cross-piece at the top.

Once more I buried my face with a shriek of horror. Mammy and Uncle Isham were praying audibly.

Time had settled accounts with the Black Prophet!

Finale.

NEARLY three decades have passed since I left my Southern home to enter a school in the distant North, and the years have brought many changes to me and mine. My grandparents lie in their long rest in the God's Acre at Winston Manor, which for years has been let to tenants. My childish vow to Uncle Isham was kept; and, indeed, all my negroes were set free when the property came into my possession. This fact made me a happier though almost a dowerless bride when my tutor and guardian became my husband, more than a score of years ago.

Two fair-haired girls with hazel eyes call me "mother"; and I thank God in my heart that I have no son, for there are strange rumours abroad these days.

Basil brought in a paper yesterday, containing a detailed account of John Brown's raid at Harper's Ferry. The cloud no

larger than a man's hand is darkening the whole sky.

"What does it mean?" I asked.

"A great national struggle," he answered. And then we were both silent.

"Basil," I said at last, "do you remember that dreadful day in Southampton, thirty years ago?"

"When you plighted your troth to me?" he asked with a smile.

"Yes, only I did not know that I was doing it."

"Well?"

"Do you remember what Nat Turner said, —'I see battles, fire, blood, freedom'?"

"He was the prototype of one who should come after," said my husband, in a grave, troubled voice. "God only knows what his words presaged; but from the visual range of supreme self-abnegation, I think, he recognised the meaning of those shadows that the future is said to 'cast before.'"

"If it comes, God pity the South,' I said,

the tears blurring a vision of my old home that rose up before me.

"If it comes, God pity us all," said my husband. "But the end will be as God wills, Penelope."

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